

Football Premiership Liverpool 2 Manchester United 0



In the line of fire... Robbie Fowler curls a free kick around the United wall for Liverpool's first goal

PHOTOGRAPH: MICHAEL STEELE

Safety-first Liverpool rout limp United

Ian Ross

IT MAY still be a little too soon to start talking about defining moments and watersheds but the destinies of championships are often shaped in circumstances such as these.

It was another fine weekend for Newcastle United. A somewhat fortunate victory over Everton at St James' Park on Saturday was followed on Sunday by the defeat — the rout — of their closest, perhaps only, rivals for the Premiership title.

Manchester United, however, could argue that Liverpool's football

is unlikely to display the same mesmerising conviction for the rest of the season as it did against them at Anfield. Maybe, but the gap between the Uniteds is now seven points — far from insurmountable, of course, with half the season to go but certainly daunting.

Football being the cruel game it is at times, Newcastle may yet stumble and fall. They proved themselves capable of it last season. On this evidence, though, Manchester United would struggle to capitalise even if invited to do so. Only as the match entered its final quarter did they begin even to flirt with the idea of

launching a recovery. Had they succeeded, it would have represented an audacious act of piracy so out-classed were they on a stage which has often proved to their liking.

Liverpool will feel aggrieved that the margin of victory was so narrow for their performance was deserving of far more.

For once Alex Ferguson made no attempt to disguise his frustration with the team. Too often in the past he has chosen to defend the indefensible. He stopped short of actually lavishing praise upon Liverpool, but that is the nature of the beast.

"Our first-half performance was

as lifeless as I have seen in many years," said Ferguson. "All things considered it was really poor."

Liverpool probably cannot capture the title this season but denying the old enemy from along the East Lancs Road would give them only marginally less pleasure than winning it themselves.

The two clubs "enjoy" a rivalry that too often threatens to breach the boundaries between sensible behaviour and undiluted hostility. United envy Liverpool's past, Liverpool envy United's present.

Though much of Sunday's taunting was in rather poor taste, it did at least generate an extraordinary atmosphere that at times seemed to drain away the fluidity and composure of even the most experienced players.

Liverpool's black November had served to raise the first pertinent questions about Roy Evans's hitherto successful managership. It was ironic really because, having used the safety-first policy of a five-man defence to lift his club away from the ruins of Graeme Souness's brief and turbulent reign, it was his sense of over-caution which many saw fit to decry.

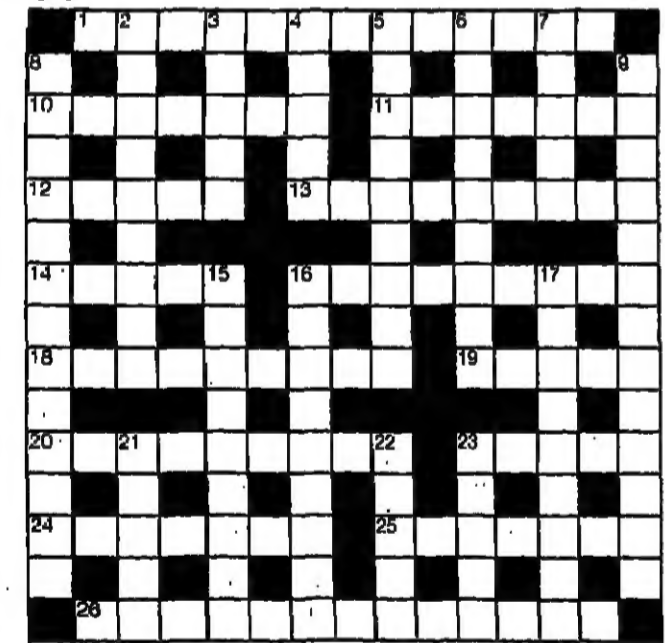
Clearly Evans is not a man for turning. He has a belief in a system and there is no room for negotiation. With Ruddock and Babbs absent through injury, the way was clear to revert to a more orthodox formation — circumstances had presented the manager with an opportunity to unburden himself.

Typically he chose not to do so. Jones moved to the left, McAteer to the right and Harkness to the centre. Not that any member of the Liverpool defence was required to break sweat until the latter stages.

That United departed for their half-time dressing-down just one goal adrift was remarkable. A lesser team would have been rendered helpless by the sheer ferocity of Liverpool's attacking football.

Once Robbie Fowler's splendid free-kick had drifted beyond the un-sighted Schmeichel after 44 minutes the die was cast. Collymore went on to miss chance after chance — Schmeichel denied him eight times — but it did not really matter as Fowler wrapped up proceedings with a proficient finish just before the final whistle.

Cryptic crossword by Chlonie



- It's not appropriate to upset a pot into it (5)
- Part of the body prone to inflammation — when the sun is up? (5)
- Trouble in Reading is deep-rooted (9)
- Burn curry all around the restaurant! (9)
- Get trace elements to recombine (5)
- Is Lucifer responsible for dysfunctional marriage? (8,5)
- Very upset, and with no one else around, apparently (6,7)
- Spent, burnt material in fuse's unacceptable (8,3)
- A bit of sceler in tea with fruit for a fickle person (9)
- Self-control shown by the others in school (9)
- Name first class country (5)
- Fill a tankard? (5)
- Inspector makes 23 across turn tail (5)

- Across**
- Women toy with small vegetables (6,7)
 - Prepares for alternative work on British Rail (7)
 - Shocking service makes one swoon! (7)
 - 7's distraught at an indication that something is missing (5)
 - Composer and artist call endlessly for new arrangement (5)
 - Relation formed when popular student takes a wife (2-3)
 - A meeting for a large number on the race track (9)
 - Retail outlet provides fresh slices with stone in it (9)

- Down**
- A skilled worker's close relatives (5)
 - Reckon to allow incursion of soldiers in a state of confusion (9)
 - Proprietries derived from custom or established behaviour (5)
 - The galley cabinet contains 60 per cent booze (7)
 - Having a liking for painting one found in intimate surroundings (7)
 - In an ideal situation for a meeting? Quite! (7,6)

Last week's solution

R I D D E N I D O M E N T O
A O U N D T R O V A T O R E
B E L O W Z E R O S W E L L
A O M W R Y D O
C O O P E R A T I V E S
K N L L Z Z S B
M O N O Y N D
O W I N G F R I E D R I C H
Z G A L O R D E R
A B O U T T U R N O P E R A
R L E Y W I N D
T W O E D D E D U N I T E S

Euro '96 draw England face Auld Enemy

David Lacey

ENGLAND were this week given a draw for the 1996 European Championship which enhanced their chances of reaching the tournament's knock-out stage. But before that can happen, Terry Venables's players must face a passionate revival of football's oldest international fixture.

Switzerland will be England's opponents in the opening match of the tournament at Wembley on June 8. Holland, on the evidence of their Anfield performance last week, will provide the hosts' toughest opposition of the first round when they come to Wembley 10 days later.

In the play-off to join the other 15 finalists, Holland beat the Republic of Ireland 2-0, both goals coming from Patrick Kluivert, the gifted 19-year-old who had won the Champions Cup for Ajax last May.

Holland dominated the game from the start and the teenager drilled home the first in the 29th minute before coolly chipping the second close to time.

In the draw at Birmingham's International Convention Centre, the

The Draw

- Group A**
- England
 - Switzerland
 - Holland
 - Scotland
- Group B**
- Spain
 - Belgium
 - France
 - Yugoslavia
- Group C**
- Germany
 - Czech Republic
 - Italy
 - Russia
- Group D**
- Denmark
 - Portugal
 - Turkey
 - Croatia

moment that drew the biggest gasp from the audience came when England were placed in Scotland's group. The two sides will come face to face at Wembley on June 15, having last met at Hampden Park in 1988, when Bobby Robson's team won 2-0.

The previous season Peter Beardsley scored the only goal against the Scots at Wembley. The countries have never played one another in the finals of a major tournament.

The annual fixture, first played in 1872, was abandoned after English fans had been involved in violence in Glasgow city centre before the 1989 match. There had been trouble the previous year and in 1977 Scottish fans, celebrating a 2-1 victory, invaded the Wembley pitch and demolished one of the goals.

Both Venables and Scotland's coach Craig Brown made the right sort of noises about always wanting to see the fixture revived. But, remembering how England lost their opening match of the 1988 European Championship to the Republic of Ireland in Stuttgart, it may be just as well they will not be encountering the Scots on June 8.

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Tory crisis after another MP defects

Rebecca Smithers

JOHN MAJOR interrupted his holiday break at Chequers on New Year's Day to talk to his closest cabinet colleagues about the deepening crisis within Britain's Conservative party, caused by the defection of Tory MP Emma Nicholson to the Liberal Democrats.

Among those Mr Major consulted was Brian Mawhinney, party chairman, who is on holiday in America with his family but who has been asked for regular briefings on the situation which could lead to an early general election. The next meeting of the Cabinet is not due until next week, but Mr Major may summon key colleagues earlier if the in-fighting sparked by her defection gets even further out of hand.

Senior Tories on Monday conceded that Mr Major could be leading a minority government by the summer, as the Defence Secretary, Michael Portillo, reopened the divisions within the Conservatives by claiming it was "incredible" to suggest the party had lurched to the right.

In the wake of Ms Nicholson's defection, senior right-wing figures, including the former party chairman Lord Tebbit and failed leadership contender John Redwood, urged Mr Major to carry on until May 1997, but admitted that he could soon be without a majority.

Senior sources said this situation could come as early as the summer, with two byelections pending and forecasters predicting disastrous results in the May local elections.

Both Lord Tebbit and Mr Redwood said the Government should continue to govern as long as it could win a confidence vote. Mr Major has already stressed that he will not be forced into an early election and that he would not "cut and run" in the face of political difficulties.

Ms Nicholson, whose defection leaves the Government facing a majority of just one after the two forthcoming byelections, had said that the Conservative party's lurch to the right — particularly on Europe — had been one of the reasons why she decided to jump ship.

But on Monday Mr Portillo insisted on BBC radio that it was



Come this way... Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown with Emma Nicholson

"very silly to say that the party has tilted to the right — that is completely incredible".

He added: "I think the party is probably much the same. We have a broad breadth of opinion within the party."

But leading figures on the Tory left immediately responded by saying that Mr Portillo was only exacerbating tensions in the party just as unity was needed to get over the defection of two backbenchers in three months. Alan Howarth, MP for Stratford-on-Avon, defected to Labour in October.

Peter Temple-Morris, MP for Leominster, who leads a recently launched pro-Europe and one-nation faction of Tory backbenchers, said Mr Portillo represented "the very worrying tilt to the right about which many of us are concerned".

He added: "I don't think that the torrent of personal abuse against

Emma Nicholson is exactly helping."

The former prime minister, Sir Edward Heath, issued a rebuke to Mr Portillo and called for an end to recriminations. "What I regret is that members of the Cabinet should be indulging in this sort of language and this approach," he said. But Mr Redwood urged Mr Major to adopt more right-wing policies in order to try to claw back Labour's 30 per cent lead in the polls.

With Parliament due to resume on January 9, Mr Major has been concentrating his efforts on rallying grassroots supporters, by stressing his commitment to one-nation Conservatism and emphasising the Government's economic achievements.

The pine official Ulster Unionist MPs have confirmed that they will not seek to bring down the Government by voting against it, provided that the Government, refuses to compromise in its demands for the

IRA to begin disarmament before Sinn Fein can join all-party talks.

But they were warned by the Northern Ireland Secretary, Sir Patrick Mayhew, not to expect special treatment in return for their pledge.

He insisted that the even-handed approach to the peace process in Ulster would continue despite the reduction in the Government's majority.

The shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, said the public could see for themselves that the Government was adopting a right-wing agenda designed for purely party political reasons.

"It is not a question of John Major himself being right-wing. It is that we have a weak prime minister who is running before the most vocal wing of his party," he said.

Why I left Tories, page 9
Comment, page 12

Ailing Saudi king hands reins to heir

David Hirsh in Beirut

KING FAHD this week handed over the effective government of Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter and a mainstay of western policies in the Middle East, to his half-brother, Prince Abdullah.

The ailing monarch, who is about 73 and suffered a debilitating stroke in November, has not formally abdicated. But the signs are that he has transferred power permanently to his heir apparent, who is about a year younger.

The succession — the fifth since the kingdom's founder, Abdul Aziz, died in 1953 — was always expected to be a difficult one. The laconic announcement of what purports to be a provisional transfer of authority does not inspire confidence that it has been smoothly accomplished.

On the contrary, its being prompted by King Fahd's illness rather than his death, and the possibility of his recovery, make it problematic. Not only are there rivalries within the House of Saud, but the regime is under challenge.

Among its problems are the growth of an Islamist opposition movement, a middle class seeking to break the princely monopoly on decision-making; cuts in the vast welfare system; high-level corruption; and foreign policies seen as subservient to the economic and political interests of the United States.

Prince Abdullah, who is known to favour less blatantly pro-American policies and more Arab self-reliance, will, at least, bring about a change of style and emphasis. The question is whether he may collide with those within the ruling family — notably the Sudairi clan to which King Fahd belongs — who want to keep the kingdom on its present course.

Arafat accused of poll tinkering

US military on trial in Okinawa

Queen orders royal divorce

Grim truth of Holloway prison

Vermeer genius of a Dutch master

Austria	AS90	Malta	46c
Belgium	B776	Netherlands	3 4.76
Denmark	DK18	Norway	NK 16
Finland	FM-10	Portugal	ES30
France	FF 13	Saudi Arabia	SR 6.50
Germany	DM 4	Spain	P 300
Greece	DR 400	Sweden	SK 16
Italy	L 3,000	Switzerland	SF 3.50

Black Watch troops 'joined Hong Kong triad'

Andrew Higgins in Hong Kong and John Mullin

SOLDIERS from the Black Watch, whose colonel-in-chief is the Queen Mother, were said this week to have become embroiled in the notorious Chinese triads in Hong Kong, where the regiment served until August 1994.

The Ministry of Defence is checking the reports, which appeared in the Hong Kong-based Eastern Express newspaper.

At least a dozen members of the Black Watch, officially called the Royal Highland Regiment, were said to have taken initiation oaths in Cantonese, mastered secret hand signals and assumed low-rank positions in the Sun Yee On triad.

The rank they are said to have held was "4 9", part of a complex numerological code designating criminal hierarchies dating back to the 17th century. Each gang member must make 36 loyalty oaths — the product

of the numbers making up the rank's name.

British troops are alleged to have come into contact with triads while working as freelance bouncers in the bars and nightclubs of Wanchai, home of the fictional 1950s prostitute Suzie Wong, and a favourite destination for visiting servicemen.

The Sun Yee On is probably the largest of some 60 triad gangs operating in Hong Kong. Triad secret societies trace their origins to the collapse of

the Ming Dynasty in 1644. Initially patriotic rather than criminal, triads quickly turned from politics to extortion while retaining much of the original ritual. Many nightclubs, mah-jong gaming parlours and bars in Hong Kong pay protection.

Britain has cut its armed forces in Hong Kong in the past decade from nearly 13,000 to about 3,000. The Black Watch is due to go back next year for a final tour that will end with the arrival of the People's Liberation Army on June 30, 1997.

Year of the puppet, page 5

Nuclear power: seeing the light after a false dawn

AS ONE of the original anti-nuclear energy activists who did speaking tours on the Continent and in Britain, beginning in 1972, I was happy to read "Britain opts out of nuclear power" (December 17). I do not, however, believe that British nuclear power was stopped because of the reported reasons: that it is uneconomical, cannot compete with other energy sources or is undergoing a privatisation process, though all are true.

In 1972, Britain was the world's leader in nuclear energy production. There was universal support from government, industry, political parties, and even anti-nuclear bomb groups. In addition, the great majority of citizens believed government and industry propaganda that nuclear energy was safe, pollution-free and would produce unlimited electricity that would be too cheap to meter.

The nuclear industry and government were both well aware of the same facts that I used in my presentations: that nuclear energy was dangerous, outrageously uneconomical, and would require astronomical government subsidies. If nuclear energy always was too expensive, what happened to make it unacceptable to government and industry now?

What happened in the past 20 years was that a citizen-based social movement educated and mobilised a popular majority of citizens on the deliberately hidden realities of nuclear energy's dangers and prohibitive costs. Nuclear power thereby became politically unviable, forcing government to change policy. A similar process happened in every other industrialised nation and is still to be culminated in France and Japan, the last two pro-nuclear power holdouts.

The demise of nuclear energy, therefore, was not caused by the sudden discovery by "City accountants in striped suits" of something they knew all along, that nuclear energy is uneconomical. Rather, the government was forced to opt out of nuclear energy because of the effectiveness of "people power", by which a majority of citizens pressured the elected government to do their will or suffer the consequences.

Although the ending of nuclear power is the result of democracy in action, the question for an advanced democracy remains: "Why did succeeding governments deceive the citizens on this critical issue for over 25 years?"

Bill Meyer, The Channon, NSW, Australia

THE FIELD of nuclear science and technology is often the victim of the intentional misuse of words and events by self-interest groups.

The chief of the new UK utility, British Energy, announced recently that Nuclear Electric's application to build Sizewell C will be withdrawn, and no use would be made of the existing planning consent for Hinkley C. In other words, the next two planned nuclear power units would not be pursued "for the moment".

Patrick Green, of the Friends of the Earth, proclaimed: "This is the final nail in the nuclear coffin." The Guardian Weekly ran an editorial on "UK nuclear power: RIP" (December 17). The lunatic fringe has curious opinions.

However, the purported front page news item ran under the heading, "Britain opts out of nuclear power" and contained entirely unjustified editorial comment on the news at hand.

World's children need advocate

What was the truth of the matter? Robert Hawley, British Energy's chief executive, actually said that, "Not only is it impossible to invest in new nuclear capacity at the moment because of the uncertainty over future UK energy prices, but the same goes for any other form of new generation in the short term."

Should then the headlines have read "UK opts out of energy"? Of course not, because Hawley went on to say, "Our AGR [Advanced Gas Cooled Reactor] and PWR stations have long planned operating lives ahead of them, and we need to consolidate their profitability."

Thus, a more accurate news item might have been headed: "Installed UK nuclear capacity saves the country from additional coal or gas generating capacity — and the consequent pollution." Or: "Nuclear saves this Green and Pleasant Land."

While we cannot expect the editorial staff to know enough to make these clear deductions, we should be able to expect a higher standard of journalistic ethics to reign in the production of a newspaper.

John Graham, Golden, Colorado, USA

Poor lesson from Australia

I'M NO supporter of the British Labour party, but I can say from Australian experience that whatever other guidance Mr Blair derives from the Australian Labor Party ("Keating has a lesson for New Labour", December 17), he would do well to eschew an accord process.

Labor portrays the accord as a Grail, but in fact it is nothing but a pact between the political and industrial wings of the labour movement, one which institutionalised union influence at the heart of government and as a result, a low wage/low productivity relations system.

Concluded over the heads of Australian workers, it has cost them dear. This pact has in fact cut real wages (Mr Keating's 7 per cent figure is only for full-time workers; overall there has been a decline of 14 per cent under Labor) and the latest accord actually guarantees a further cut of 8.25 a week to the lowest paid. Labor claims that the accord has been responsible for the decline in industrial disputes; in fact the rate of industrial disputes in Australia over the past decade tracked the OECD-wide trend down, bottomed out at a level much higher than that of our trading partners and for the last year has been rising again.

November/December saw the worst outbreak of industrial conflict in more than a decade, with a national wharf strike costing the country \$50 million. And the accord has ensured a rate of productivity increase which is at best mediocre.

The accord gives union bosses an undue influence, one which they have used to veto the industrial relations reform which is one of the most urgent priorities facing Australia. Without reform, the rank and file will continue to suffer the declining wages and living standards they have experienced under Labor.

If Mr Keating is defeated in the forthcoming election, it will be at the hands of disaffected erstwhile Labor supporters. How ironic it would be if Mr Blair were to adopt such a failed concept as the accord at the heart of his re-election strategy.

Peter Reith, MP, Shadow Minister of Industrial Relations, Canberra, Australia

World's children need advocate

GRACA MACHEL is to be commended for heading a two-year study of the impact of war on children (December 17). Unicef has been doing exactly that for some 50 years, alerting the world to the plight of children as the tragic events occur. Yet despite their reports being well-written and well-presented, they have long planned operating lives ahead of them, and we need to consolidate their profitability.

In part to address the shocking casualties inflicted, a World Summit for Children was held at the United Nations in New York in September 1990. Their World Declaration was inspiring and was followed by a Plan of Action. One of the opening sentences reads: "We have gathered here at the World Summit to undertake a joint commitment to give every child a better future."

Concluding words included "peace, tolerance, understanding and dialogue". Four months later, UN forces attacked Iraq. A Harvard University report described the children of Iraq as the most traumatised children of war ever found. And the children of Iraq are still suffering, five years on, from the current UN embargo.

So much for the World Summit for Children. So much for the UN Security Council whose permanent members supply 85 per cent of the weapons used to maim and kill children for commercial profit.

Some way has to be found to reduce the death, misery and destruction inflicted on children in times of armed conflict. The UN, sadly, is unlikely to be the vehicle for such an initiative.

Some nation or global organisation has to take this initiative and act as advocate for the children, giving them a voice for the first time. It would be a great step forward to towards world peace if this happened.

John Wheeler, Taupo, New Zealand

Briefly

IT WAS an encouraging change to read Francis Deron's assessment (Le Monde, December 17) of the parliamentary elections recently held in Taiwan. The article showed a noticeable diversion from the western media's tendency to portray the often stormy path of party politics in Taiwan as a mere object of derision. I share his dismay that a country in which a much larger percentage of the population partake in the democratic process than do in most other Asian states can continue to be officially ignored by the world community. For all the West's rhetoric about the virtues of democratisation in east Asia, it would seem that investment opportunities in China still speak louder than democracy in Taiwan.

Jeremy Taylor, Sydney, Australia

RICHARD NORTON-TAYLOR ("The ghosts of Nuremberg", December 31) is right to be pessimistic about the forthcoming international tribunal in the former Yugoslavia. But the world's media can do something: they can remind us frequently and for years to come of the crimes these evil men and women committed.

Radovan Karadzic may not rot in jail but we might have the pleasure of seeing him hounded for the rest of his life. M Steiner, London

I WAS puzzled to learn that the European Community has decided to call its currency the Euro in order to avoid naming it after an Australian animal. The Euro is indeed an Australian animal, but so is the Euro, which is also known as the common wallaroo (Macropus robustus).

Paul Wallen, Katoomba, NSW, Australia

WILL one have to be confronted by Euro to qualify for Euro coins and notes, or will Euros be in only after the introduction of the new currency? Peter Lodge, Hull

THE FRENCH saying "manager de la vache enragée" is usually rendered as "to be hard up as hardly able to keep body and soul together". I have hitherto thought the literal translation too bizarre to be credible, but could it just mean to be reduced to eating meat unfit for human consumption? Edwin Gilbert, Malvern, Worcestershire

TODAY I overheard two children calling each other "beebrate". Is this anything to do with BSE? Richard Bramhall, Swilth Wells, Powys, Wales

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Arafat lambasted for poll meddling

Derek Brown in Jerusalem

THE Palestinian leader, Yasser Arafat, was sharply criticised on Monday by European Union observers of this month's general election for persistently meddling with the polling rules.

The PLO chief was lambasted — though not named — in a statement, headed Enough is Enough, from the head of the EU election unit, the former Swedish diplomat Carl Lidbom.

He obliquely questioned the independence of the election commission appointed by Mr Arafat and complained of confusion and uncertainty caused by a stream of decrees altering the election procedure.

He said: "The European Union electoral unit believes that the series of improvisations and irregularities should now cease if the forthcoming elections are to retain any credibility, both locally and internationally, and calls on the Palestinian National Authority and its chairman [Mr Arafat] to take urgent steps to try to build public and international confidence in the election process."

The strong language reflects the growing exasperation of the EU and other observers, who were warmly welcomed at the outset of the election process but have lately been given the cold shoulder by the Palestinian Authority.

The original election commission resigned last month to clear the way for a new, supposedly neutral commission to oversee the nomination of candidates, the campaign, and the polling, scheduled for January 20. Mr Arafat, who took 40 days to promulgate the election law, finally signed it in early December. Since then he has issued decree after

decree tinkering with procedure and in some cases making significant alterations.

Observers of his style are not surprised. For 30 years he has insisted on running the Palestinian cause as a one-man band. His inability to delegate has become the central feature of self-rule government, in which little is contemplated, let alone achieved, without his blessing.

The election machine, assembled over many months to give Palestinians their first experience of democracy, is now being run at least as much from Mr Arafat's headquarters in Gaza as from the electoral commission office in Ramallah.

He has arbitrarily increased the number of seats in the new council, from 82 to 87 at the last count. He has ordered the reopening of candidate nominations in all constituencies, not just the ones allocated extra seats.

Registration of electors was continuing last week, almost a fortnight after it was supposed to be completed. Most ominously, the official campaigning period has been cut from 22 to 14 days.

Mr Arafat has also, belatedly, appointed a PLO aide, Mahmud Abbas, to head the election commission. Mr Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, was a principal architect of the first self-rule accord with Israel and is still said to be a close confidant of the PLO leader. He has yet to meet the EU observers to discuss their concerns.

Monday's statement acridly noted: "At such a meeting Mr Lidbom would have listened with interest to an explanation of why the central election commission was not set up earlier and why none of the allocations of seats was issued in the name of the central election com-



Palestinians cheer as Israeli jeeps pulled out of the police station in the West Bank town of Ramallah last week. PHOTOGRAPH: JEROME DELAY

mission, the supreme body organising the elections, which was given that specific task in the election law.

"The first allocation of seats was done instead by presidential decree and the number of seats has subsequently been changed twice, also by presidential decree. Mr Lidbom would also have welcomed reassur-

ance from Mr Abbas about the political independence of the central election commission."

The EU, which has largely funded the election process, will have 300 observers in position by polling day. Hundreds more international monitors are expected from Japan, Norway, Canada and elsewhere.

Turkish parties unite to keep out Islamists

Jonathan Rugman in Istanbul

THE leaders of Turkey's mainstream secular parties began talks on forming a possible three-party coalition government, in a blatant attempt to keep the Islamic revivalist Welfare Party — which won the December 24 general election — out of power.

The Welfare Party (or Refah) advocates an Islamic common market, pulling Turkey out of Nato and renegotiating the customs union deal with the European Union which the European Parliament ratified last month.

The party's promise of a "just order" for the poor and alienated won it more than 21 per cent of the vote, increasing its share of the 550 parliamentary seats from 38 in 1991 to 158.

Although Refah fell far short of winning the 276 seats needed to govern alone, the result has frayed the nerves of the secular establishment, and sent radical Islamic elements their biggest boost in the republic's history.

Tying for second place, with more than 19 per cent of the vote each, were the two bickering pro-western conservative groups — the Motherland Party (Anap) of Mesut Yilmaz, and the True Path Party (DYP) of the outgoing prime minister, Tansu Ciller. Their leaders have agreed to work towards a coalition that would isolate Refah, but talks have become bogged down over the issue of who should become prime minister.

Ms Ciller and Mr Yilmaz cannot muster enough support between them to win a vote of confidence when parliament convenes later this month. They have therefore begun exploratory talks with two leftwing parties, headed by Ms Ciller's former coalition partner Deniz Baykal and the veteran Socialist Bulent Ecevit, who is vying for the premiership with Ms Ciller.

Yet a three-party, left-right coalition is a tried and tested recipe for political chaos in Turkey, where unstable governments led to three years of military rule, ending in 1983. "The whole economy is on standby because of the instability," said Atalay Sahinoglu, chairman of the Istanbul chamber of commerce.

Refah's leader, Necmettin Erbakan, aged 69, is resentful of attempts to deprive him of a leadership he believes he has won, and which he will soon be too old to re-contest. The official election results are not published until later this month. A new Speaker must then be elected — a contentious issue as the honorary position is usually filled by the biggest party. Any party appointed by the president to form a coalition must win a confidence vote, and it may be February before the horse-trading ends and a new administration is in place.

A senior Refah official confirmed last week that contacts between Anap and Refah had begun, and he warned against any Algeria-style attempt to exclude Islamists from the political process. "If you prevent us from coming to the front, then the people will push us to the front."

But many Refah supporters believe that by going into opposition against a rickety coalition, the party stands a chance of performing even better.

President Chirac, reduced the planned number of explosions from eight to six, after international protests. Only Britain among European countries backed the French plan.

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Syria's talks with Israel place alliance with Iran under strain

GW - Jan. 7, 96

David Hirst in Beirut

ONE of the most enduring of Middle East alliances — between "radical" Syria and fundamentalist Iran — is under strain.

As Tehran announced at the weekend that its vice-president, Hassan Habibi, was cancelling a planned visit to Damascus, the Iranian press unleashed an unprecedented assault on Syria.

Damascus — which has renewed peace talks with Israel — was pilloried for its "humiliating and beggary" discussions with the Israelis and its "ingratitude" towards Iran.

As an implacable enemy of the US-sponsored peace process, and chief backer of Islamist resistance to it, Iran cannot but see Syria's potential defection as a blow to its regional influence.

Tehran has expressed its concern at Syria's public support for the Gulf states in their territorial disputes with Iran; it has yet to take a position on Syria's stated interest in curbing the guerrilla war that the Iranian-backed Hizballah is waging against Israel in south Lebanon.

In progressive and anti-Zionist ranks, Syria is now taking its place in the anti-Iranian camp as it submits to US and Zionist dictates.

South Lebanon is unable to emerge as a key arena of Iranian-Syrian friction. The Syrian foreign minister said in Beirut recently that Syria was "for calming things down", because the Israeli shelling of Lebanese towns and the Hizballah's response, missiles on north Israel, sometimes went "beyond reasonable limits".

Last week Hizballah leaders were in Tehran discussing the possible consequences of an Israeli-Syrian peace. They do not seem to have been relieved to yet.

On Friday last week Hizballah fired two Katyusha salvoes into northern Israel "in retaliation for the massacre of our civilians".

An Israeli minister warned Syria that if it was serious about peace, "it must stop the Hizballah".

The Tehran newspaper al-Jumhuri al-Islami said on Monday: "After figuring for years

Chirac tests unions' will by renewing call for cuts

Alex Duval Smith in Paris

FRENCH trade unions face an uphill task to renew nationwide strikes this year after President Jacques Chirac reaffirmed his support on Monday for government cuts to the welfare state.

In the traditional new year message, Mr Chirac confounded critics who had predicted prime minister Alain Juppé's imminent fall under the same axe as welfare benefits.

Speaking for the first time about the proposed cuts, which triggered three weeks of public sector strikes and demonstrations last month, Mr Chirac praised Mr Juppé's "courageous action".

He said the measures, such as increasing the years public sector workers must serve to qualify for a full pension, were pre-conditions to secure France's financial health.

The constitutional council has approved Mr Juppé's measures for eliminating the accumulated debt of the social security budget. They include an immediate 0.5 per cent income tax rise.

communist-led CGT spearheaded last month's mass demonstrations and nationwide transport and postal strikes, welcomed Mr Chirac's willingness to have a dialogue. "The problem is to know whether the prime minister will apply the recommendations," he said.

The unions had warned of further unrest this year unless the government made new concessions. But even though Mr Chirac and Mr Juppé remain low in the opinion polls, it is uncertain whether the unions can motivate workers to strike again, just before Christmas, a survey found that 22 per cent of voters were "satisfied" with the president and the prime minister — an increase on the previous month's 14 per cent.

France again defied world opinion and ignored objections by its European partners last week by setting off the fifth nuclear bomb in its resumed, testing programme at Moruroa atoll in the South Pacific.

The blast was equivalent to "less than" 30,000 tons of TNT and is expected to be followed by a final explosion on the atoll this month.

President Chirac, reduced the planned number of explosions from eight to six, after international protests. Only Britain among European countries backed the French plan.

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Forbes makes his money talk



The US this week

Martin Walker

IT IS becoming increasingly difficult to take seriously the Republican party's approach to the presidential election that will take place 11 months from now. Five of the main candidates failed to gather the 1,000 signatures required to get on the ballot for the primary in the state of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island is a small state, but it is part of the five-state grouping that will hold the Yankee primary on March 5. Not to be on the ballot snatches of an amateurism in political organisation that is bizarre. Only the front-runner, Senator Robert Dole, his colleague Senator Richard Lugar, and the former governor of Tennessee, Lamar Alexander, won a place on the ballot.

Senator Phil Gramm, the right-wing nationalist Pat Buchanan, Congressman Robert Dornan, and the black conservative and anti-abortion campaigner, Alan Keyes, all failed to make the ballot. And so, oddly, did Steve Forbes, whose success elsewhere in the Republican primary stakes is another reason to marvel at the both the Republicans are making of their attempt to unseat President Clinton.

It is becoming ridiculous. If the opinion polls are right, Forbes is the only one serious challenger to Dole in the crucial early primary states of Iowa, New Hampshire, Arizona and Delaware. And he is a man who has never been elected to anything, has never run anything except the business magazine empire he inherited, and wants to return the US to the gold standard.

Forbes has simply ignored the party machines and local political bigwigs to appeal directly to the primary voters through paid TV ads. For the past eight weeks, the Forbes ads have been running 18 times a day on all the TV networks in all the early primary states. This is the kind of media blitz that normally doesn't happen even in the last week of a hard-fought campaign. Two months before the first primaries, it is unheard of. But it is working.

Breakfast time in the first primary state of New Hampshire, the 6.59am slot just before the morning news. The owlish face peers through the thickest of spectacle lenses, and the prim little mouth purses into a smug and constant smile. "I say scrap the income tax. Scrap the Internal Revenue Service. Scrap the tax code. Put in a low flat tax. It's simple. It's honest. And that's a big change for Washington."

It goes on all day. Then just before the 6.30pm national news, there he is again. "He's been called a

champion of economic growth and a visionary. He is Steve Forbes." The owlish blink, the cheery dimples, the upbeat message: "America's best days are still to come."

Until now, Forbes was best known for his father, a bizarrely ambivalent figure, the son of an immigrant from Scotland who succeeded in the US with a sternly Calvinist approach to hard work and success. He built his Forbes magazine empire by relentlessly boosting wealth and free markets, and glorying in the trappings of wealth, from his French chateau to his island in Fiji, from his 151ft yacht, The Highlander, to his private plane, The Capitalist Tool.

He tried politics, getting elected to the New Jersey state legislature and twice running for governor. But when that career stalled, he decided to throw off the Calvinist cloak and have fun. It became the mid-life crisis that never stopped. He became a bisexual biker who dressed in black leather and roared up to gay bars on his Harley-Davidson, took up hot-air ballooning and hang-gilding. Until his death in 1990, the elder Forbes was the most lavish party-giver of his time, spending \$2 million on his 70th birthday thrash in Morocco, where his escort was Elizabeth Taylor.

"It would be silly to imitate my father," says Forbes the younger. "Learn his approach to life, yes. But take up hang-gilding in some competition to prove who is the more daring? No."

A chess-player whose college sports credentials at Princeton were won by scoring the games and organising the away matches rather than by playing, young Steve was brought up in the Calvinist mould. Every Saturday his father would take 70 corporate and political bosses from Manhattan up the Hudson river on board the family yacht. At the end of the cruise lay West Point, the US military academy, where Forbes rented a box to watch the weekly football games. Young Steve had to spend every Friday evening and Saturday morning with a pile of photographs, learning by heart the names and faces of each of the guests.

"At an early age, we were expected to know, so to speak, where our bread was buttered," he recalls. He followed dutifully in the family footsteps, going to his father's old college of Princeton, and starting a national magazine while still an undergraduate. Called Business Today, a monthly aimed at career-



ILLUSTRATION: NICOLA JENKINS

mind college students, it now has a circulation of 200,000.

The heart of the company remains Forbes magazine, which now boasts a higher circulation and more pages of advertising than the veteran Fortune business magazine. That is one achievement of which Steve Forbes can justifiably boast to the voters. The other is that he is the only financial journalist to have won four Crystal Owl awards, given by the USX corporation for the most accurate economic forecasts.

That success in the stewardship of the publishing empire gave him the confidence to branch out into public life. Two years ago, he agreed to take over the chairmanship of Empower America, the political vehicle for former Congressman Jack Kemp and the free-market zealots among the Republicans. When Kemp decided that his social views on race and immigration were too progressive for the Christian Coalition, and decided not to run for the presidency in 1996, Forbes decided that the cause still deserved a champion. Pressed by the supply-side economists who had backed Ronald Reagan, such as Jude Wanniski and Arthur Laffer, he declared his candidacy last September.

The quixotic campaign was instantly and widely derided as "Perot Lite", another mega-rich ego looking to exchange disposable income

for political fame. But Perot had the advantage of novelty. There was no parallel flood of free media interest in the Forbes announcement. So he set out to buy some.

Thanks to well-intentioned reforms of the campaign finance rules, American politics has become the playground of the rich. If you set out to raise money from the public, from business and from lobby groups in the traditional way, the rules limit a candidate to a maximum \$1,000 a head from individuals, and \$5,000 a head from political action committees. But spend your own money, and the sky is the limit. Ross Perot spent \$60 million of his own money in 1992, roughly \$3 for each vote he received, to get 19 per cent of the presidential poll.

Because Dole and Gramm and other candidates have applied for federal funds to match personal contributions and finance their campaigns, they have to abide by the federal election rules which limit them to spending \$1.1 million each in Iowa and \$600,000 each in New Hampshire. By not applying for federal funds, Forbes can spend as much as he likes.

And while the others follow convention and spend money on large campaign offices with full-time staff who take polls, run telephone banks and canvass door-to-door, Forbes just buys TV time. No political an-

lyst can wholly explain the sudden Forbes phenomenon. Partly it is America's perennial love affair with the super-rich, whenever they deign to come down to press the flesh of ordinary mortals. Partly it is the power of his TV advertising blitzkrieg. Partly it is the novelty of his ideas, but mainly it is political desperation among Republicans who are sure Bill Clinton is beatable, but cannot yet discern any conventional politician who looks able to win the election in November.

Dissatisfaction with the rest of the Republican field, led by 72-year-old Senator Dole, is the dominant political mood as the election year opens. All the opinion polls currently show Clinton beating Dole by at least a 10-point margin.

Tax reform lies at the heart of the Forbes campaign. He wants to scrap income tax altogether and replace it with a flat tax. The first \$36,000 of household income would attract no tax at all. Thereafter, all income would be liable to a flat tax of 17 per cent, with no exceptions for mortgage payments, no capital gains taxes, no other federal taxes at all.

There is a Wall Street wing to the Republican party which is bored by the debates over abortions and family values that preoccupy the religious right, and which frets at the message of hair-shirt austerity of the Republicans in Congress who want to cut government spending to balance the budget. Made up of the big corporate tycoons and heirs like Pricer Du Pont (of the chemical giant), Leonard Lauder (the cosmetics fortune), and Ace Greenberg (Bear Stearns broker), this Wall Street group loves the unabashed capitalism of Forbes the magazine, and is beginning to put a few millions on Forbes the man.

JUST before Christmas, they organised a "Friends of Forbes" fund-raising dinner, at which 1,500 Wall Street tycoons paid \$1,000 a plate to the only candidate who believes in bringing back the gold standard. Forbes is their man, unfailingly sunny and upbeat in his promise of growth through tax cuts, and rich enough to mount devastating negative ads against his better-known rivals.

"The Senate was to vote on term limits in October. But it didn't. Would you believe Senate Majority leader Bob Dole cancelled the vote? So there will be no vote in the Senate on term limits this year," says the owlish grin. "I'm Steve Forbes. Senator Dole is wrong. Term limits will restore honesty to Washington, and that's the kind of change we need."

Forbes has no time for Gramm's politics of resentment against the welfare class, and his demand "that those in the wagon get out for once and help the rest of us push."

"The genius of America is that we have entrepreneurs to design and build engines to pull wagons, so people don't have to," says Forbes, who is firmly convinced that his free-market optimism is the only way the Republicans can stop Clinton.

"I really believe this, that in post-cold war America, a new era can be born, with personal computers spreading power to the people and away from the big government bureaucrats. We can free people from the state, with their own pensions saving accounts, their own health-care insurance, their own choice of school through vouchers. We can give individuals more power, more control, more opportunity and more choice. That is the essence of the American experiment and we have to get back to it."

US military on trial in Okinawa

A tiny island south-west of Japan has been Little America for 50 years. But the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl has enraged locals and boosted their desire to get the US troops out. **Andrew Higgins reports**

MAJOR Edmund Memi of Brooklyn, New York, is explaining why the 18th Air Wing needs its own 18-hole golf course bang in the middle of Okinawa and why the US Air Force should never surrender an inch of its 11,500 acres of prime Japanese real estate.

"We've got men here who are used to the American way of life," he says. "Back home in the States this is perfectly normal. It is not an extravagance. It is provided for the morale of our troops. All work and no play helps nobody. We'd rather have our men hitting golf balls than hitting . . ." He stops himself abruptly in mid-sentence.

He has struggled valiantly for more than an hour to avoid the real issue in Okinawa and prove that 28,000 US troops pose no threat to anyone.

Sure, a few Japanese want back some of the land they lost in 1945 (the so-called "mami mat" landlords). Yes, they might resent their property being used by a foreign military to play golf, fly land sometimes crash F-15 warplanes and store 54,000 tonnes of munitions, including, though nobody will say so officially, nuclear warheads. And, of course, the neighbours don't like it when fighter squadrons take off in the middle of the night ("We try to avoid it but you don't go to war in the dark if you don't practise in the dark").

Surely, though, a few grumpy neighbours is small price to pay for half a century of peace and stability? "We are not here for ourselves but for the good of Japan and the rest of Asia."

The sentence left unfinished by Major Memi at the Kadena Air Base is completed in grisly detail a few miles down Highway 58 in Hearing Room 201 of the Naha District Court. Here, in a hall so scrubbed and polished it glows antiseptic white, there is no dodging what soldiers are capable of doing in their free time — when not hitting golf balls, watching NFL football matches and Playboy channel movies on cable TV or guzzling duty-free bottles of beer at on-base bars.

The court starts its business for the day at 10 o'clock sharp. First to appear before a panel of three black-robed judges is US Marine 1st Class Joshua Hill. He makes a swaggering entry wearing handcuffs and a T-shirt that says "Boss". He is accused of bludgeoning a 24-year-old Japanese woman to death with a hammer. He admits to hammering

her head but says he did not mean to kill her.

Before they can decide how long to lock him up for, the judges (there is no jury) want to know how many times he hit his victim, a shop assistant called Kanako Kinjo. The prosecution estimates the number of hammer blows to the head at 70; the defence suggests "only" 20; Hill, a Korean-Afro-American from Ohio, grunts and rolls his eyes.

He is no more helpful on the question of motive. He mutters something about bad driving but declines to elaborate. His lawyer, Misunobu Matsunga, asks for psychological tests "because what he did was not understandable". The judges, no less baffled, set another hearing in a fortnight's time.

After a break for lunch, the Japanese justice system has its second encounter of the day with the US Armed Forces in Hearing Room 201. The afternoon session centres on the abduction and gang rape of a 12-year-old Japanese schoolgirl. Sitting handcuffed at the front of the court are two more Marines, this time from Georgia, and a Texan in the Navy. Also in court are two of their mothers and a wife.

The three men allegedly seized the girl as she walked home from buying school notebooks in a village shop. After forcing her into a white rental car, they bound her wrists with tape and drove to a sugar cane field in the north of Okinawa. There she was raped and then dumped, semi-conscious and badly battered.

Again, there are confessions and again the task faced by the judges is less one of choosing between guilt and innocence than calibrating degrees of a horror that defy understanding. (All three admit to planning and then carrying out the abduction but disagree on who did exactly what in the car.)

Even defence witnesses splutter with appalled incomprehension. "As the father of two children I find it difficult to believe that anyone could be capable of doing something like this, especially to a child," says John Deardorff, a military officer called to act as a character witness for 22-year-old Naval recruit Marcus Gill. All he can offer by way of mitigating circumstances is a dim recollection that Gill had put on weight at the time of the rape and worried about flunking his physical: "He was upset about his weight control problem."

The response of Okinawa, scene of a bloody second world war battle in which more than 200,000 died, has been one of predictable outrage. The Pentagon, and much of Tokyo's political élite, voice revulsion while praying that the horrors of Hearing Room 201 will soon be forgotten. The case of Joshua Hill — now known to his Marine Corps buddies as "MC Hammer", an allusion to the American rap musician — may well fade from memory. The press has shown little interest in his victim. One of the few newspapers to report the case regularly is the US military's own in-house publication, Stars and Stripes.

The indifference has a reason: the murdered woman mixed with marines. Even zealous critics of military violence suggest this some-



A women's group outside Japan's foreign ministry in Tokyo protests against the US military presence

how explains her fate. "Using a hammer should be recognised as a violent act but this killing was a personal matter between two people," says Ima Yuichi, a trade union leader and activist in a campaign to get US soldiers out of Okinawa.

But passions aroused by the rape of a pre-teen schoolgirl untainted by any past association with her attackers show no sign of abating, despite a claim by the Pentagon that a recent visit to Japan by US Defence Secretary William Perry had "put the Okinawa problem behind us".

The furore has claimed the career of Admiral Richard Macke, overall commander of US forces in the Pacific. He took early "retire-

The overkill might not match the pandemonium that surrounded the O.J. Simpson trial in Los Angeles but there are still plenty of kibitzers eager to pronounce on proceedings. As in LA, the hot issue is race — at least for the Americans. All the defendants are black.

On hand to monitor the trial for any hint of racial bias is a representative of the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People, two American lawyers who spend their time sniping at the Japanese defence team, and various emissaries from Georgia, home state of two of the accused. "There is so much publicity surrounding this trial you have to ask yourself whether the case is really being tried in there or in the court of public opinion," says Rose Johnson, a member an Atlanta-based group called the Centre for Democratic Renewal.

Michael Griffiths, a lawyer representing the Georgians — Marine Privates 1st Class Rodrigo Harp and Kendrick Ledet — wants the trial moved elsewhere. He accuses Okinawa's governor, Masahide Ota, of "poisoning the integrity of the judicial process" with an advertisement in the New York Times in which he cited the rape as an argument for the closure of US bases.

For Okinawans, whose distaste for the American military goes hand in hand with a deep mistrust of Tokyo, it all smacks of yet more unwelcome meddling by outsiders. A tree outside the courthouse has been hung with a stencilled sign in broken but unambiguous English: "To beggar soldiers! We've paid you for everything even a bite of bread. If you have a piece of pride GET OUT."

The biggest and most violently wayward US contingent in Okinawa is the Marine Corps, the Third Expeditionary Force, which calls itself the "Tip of the Spear", has 18,000 men, more than 60 per cent of them under the age of 21.

Each new marine gets a booklet to explain his mission: "Marines stationed here are part of the for-

wardmost defence against any potential hostile aggression towards the United States in the Pacific theatre . . . When they're not training hard, they're playing hard. Immeasurable time and effort have been selflessly provided over the years by hardcharging volunteers to make the lives of their neighbours better."

And those who charge too hard? "If your actions result in serious injury or death to a Japanese . . . you should offer compensation of up to \$1,000."

The text, like much else about the US military presence in Okinawa, is badly outdated, a relic of the simple certainties of preppy 1960s soda fountain sports rhetoric and Cold War Pax Americana in the Pacific.

"You don't have to be Thucydides or Henry Kissinger to realise that this situation is highly unstable and could blow up in our faces," says Chalmers Johnson, head of the Japan Policy Research Institute in California. "Japan must become a normal country and we must end our protectorate. We are defending a country while going into debt to it to the tune of \$60 billion a year." When Washington last fully revised its security treaty with Tokyo in 1960, the US was 11 times richer than Japan. Today, it is only 1.3 times wealthier.

The Pentagon dismisses such logic as isolationist claptrap. It also unmasks many Japanese and other Asians. Singapore's older statesman, Lee Kuan Yew, says encouraging Japan to build up its own military is "like giving a chocolate liquor to an alcoholic".

After reluctantly promising to slash US troops levels in Japan and Korea in 1990 and then again in 1992, the US defence department has reversed itself with an unequivocal commitment to maintain "a stable forward presence" in Asia of 100,000 men. It argues that it is cheaper to keep American troops in Japan, where Tokyo is supposed to pick up 70 per cent of the tab, than back home in the United States. (South Korea pays nearly 90 per cent of the cost of keeping 37,000 American soldiers.)

The arrangement used to suit all sides — except for the Okinawans, whose tiny island plays host to two-thirds of all US ground troops stationed in Japan. The rape, however, has served as a catalyst for a more general, albeit unfocused, sense that something must change.

But what? Few Japanese want to drive out US troops altogether; fewer still are ready to share Okinawa's burden and welcome teenage marines into their own neighbourhood. "The cold war in Europe ended when people tore down the Berlin Wall. It has ended in Asia with the rape of a 12-year-old schoolgirl," claims Rose Johnson. "American troops in Japan look a lot like the Russian troops who lingered in East Germany for years after the Wall came down. Vested interests are fighting, but it is all over."

For Okinawans, though, it is far from over. At the Hamagawa Junior School, teachers still get drowned out in the middle of lessons by the din of F-15s coming in to land at the nearby Kadena Air Base. The school principal, Higa Hideo, still has to interrupt assembly meetings to wait for the noise to die down. However, he does thank the US military for one thing: "Because of all their noise pollution, students greet me very politely in the morning. Here we all know how to shout."



Japan is 116

The Week in Britain James Lewis

Precarious peace fails to stop bloody Irish justice

HERE HAVE been an estimated 263 "punishment beatings" in Northern Ireland — 87 loyalist and 176 republican — since the ceasefire was declared in 1994. More worryingly, there have been seven killings since last April, four of them in the past month. An outfit calling itself Direct Action Against Drugs, generally supposed to be the IRA in another guise, has said it carried out two of the killings last year.

Under cover of the paramilitary warfare, there has always been a subculture of social terrorism, drug trafficking, protection rackets and other forms of criminality in Northern Ireland. The continuing violence may well be a settling of old scores, or even an attempt by the IRA to consolidate its grip on republican strongholds at a time when the writ of the (overwhelmingly Protestant) police is slowly gaining acceptance.

The uneasy situation did not deter the Prime Minister, John Major, from making a pre-Christmas visit to Ireland and meeting his Dublin counterpart, John Bruton, who said that in response to the killings, and in the discovery of an IRA plot to carry out a series of armed robberies, he had dropped plans for the early release of republican prisoners. Sinn Fein has refused to condemn the violence — saying only that it "does not condone" it — which led Mr Major to denounce the "fiction" that Sinn Fein and the IRA were separate organisations.

Echoes from the past will continue to haunt the various parties in the conflict as they inch their way painfully towards a permanent settlement.

One such was the payment by the British government of nearly £400,000 to relatives of three IRA members who were shot dead by security forces in Gibraltar in 1988. The money was to cover their legal costs in taking a case to the European Court of Human Rights. The court had ruled that the killings were a breach of the European Convention on Human Rights, but rejected claims for compensation.

Hugo Young, page 12

CONSERVATIVE Eurosceptics and others delivered a humiliating end-of-term rebuff to the Government by narrowly defeating it in a Commons vote on fisheries policy. The vote itself — an insignificant motion to "take note" of the Government's approach to the EU's Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) — meant nothing in itself. But it did emphasise the vulnerability of the Tories' dwindling parliamentary majority.

Fishermen, concentrated in just a few constituencies, have been seriously hit by the EU's policy of conserving stocks by severely reducing catch quotas, and have been angered by the incursion of Spanish trawlers into fishery areas once held to be exclusively British. In an overnight haggle in Brussels, the day after the vote, Britain did manage to achieve higher catch quotas than scientists had recommended, but fishermen's organisations were not placated.

Under new arrangements which took effect this week, Spanish ves-

sels were heading for the so-called Irish Box, between southern Ireland and the English and Welsh coasts, where the CFP allows them to fish for the first time. They were being watched by one fisheries protection vessel and surveillance aircraft to see that they do not exceed their catch quotas or otherwise bend the rules.

THE PRIVATISATION of rail passenger services got under way in earnest when the first franchise, covering routes between London and the South-west, was sold to the country's biggest bus company, Stagecoach Holdings. The company promised to run 86 per cent of existing services, improve some stations, and provide dedicated bus links.

But the transport select committee of the Commons recently uncovered the fact that Stagecoach has been referred to the Office of Fair Trading on no fewer than 24 occasions, and reprimanded by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission for "predatory and deplorable behaviour".

There was also anxiety about the credentials of bidders for other rail business. Omnibus, the US company bidding for British Rail's three freight businesses, is in partnership with a US construction group, Peter Kiewit, which is involved in a criminal investigation into the multi-billion dollar Los Angeles subway project. And Wisconsin Central, which last month took over the royal train and mail-carrying services, is in partnership with a New Zealand merchant bank, Fay Richwhite, which is being investigated over alleged tax fraud.

THE NEW YEAR Honours List, a lacustrine affair, was criticised for its inclusion of Tory financial backers. John Prescott, Labour's deputy leader, singled out the knighthood conferred on Graham Kirkham, a Thatcherite businessman, who is believed to have given the Conservative party a £4 million bridging loan. Dowling Street said the award was for "charitable services" and that his political service was not a factor.

Another knighthood, "for services to the electrical retailing industry", went to Stanley Kalms, chairman of the Dixons store chain, who makes a personal donation to the Tories on top of his company's annual £25,000.



Ice age... a motorist in Whitby, north Yorkshire, is stranded by heavy snow. PHOTOGRAPH: GRABEMORE

Freezing weather takes its toll

FREEZING FOG and sub-zero temperatures throughout last week disrupted many parts of England and Wales and almost all of Scotland.

In Shetland, hundreds of islanders spent days without power as emergency services fought to restore electricity cut off by the ferocious weather on Christmas Eve.

Throughout the country elderly people waited to hear whether they could qualify for cold weather payments as temperatures fell to minus 20C in parts of Scotland.

Labour MP George Foulkes called for a "double premium" to be paid when temperatures fell below minus 10C for 24 hours.

The Government said that the £8.50 per week payment, to help those on income support cope with

heating bills during cold snaps, would be made across the country.

The Department of Social Security said that the payments had so far been triggered in virtually the whole of Scotland, Tyneside, Teesside, Carlisle, Manchester, Birmingham, North Yorkshire, West Yorkshire, West Midlands and Wiltshire.

Under existing legislation only three groups are eligible for cold weather payments: families with children under five, the disabled and long-term sick, and pensioners.

The severe weather led to several deaths. In West Yorkshire a team of 20 doctors and nurses lost a five-hour battle to save the lives of a young girl and two men who were submerged in a freezing lake after two rescue attempts went tragically wrong.

The three were declared dead when the hospital team finally admitted that attempts to resuscitate them had failed. They were Tracy Patterson, aged 11, of Hensworth, West Yorkshire, who had fallen through an inch of ice into freezing water after chasing a dog, Jack Crowshaw, aged 51, of Wakefield, and off-duty fireman Michael Mearns, aged 48. They were pulled from the water two hours after they fell in and taken to Pontefract general in fire trucks.

The head of accident and emergency at the hospital, consultant Mike Playforth, had initially been optimistic, saying extraordinary recoveries had taken place in drowning victims whose life systems were slowed but not extinguished by freezing temperatures.

Chief Inspector Michael Devlin of West Yorkshire police said that both men had been recommended for posthumous awards.

Tory MP faces £400,000 legal bill after libel defeat

Martin Linton

CONSERVATIVE MP David Ashby faces a legal bill estimated at £400,000 after losing his libel case last month over allegations in the Sunday Times that he is a homosexual. However, it seems unlikely he will cause John Major further trouble by being declared bankrupt and disqualified from the Commons.

No MP has been disqualified for bankruptcy since 1928. Lawyers believe that Mr Ashby, a barrister, will be able to agree repayment schedules and avoid eroding any further the Government's precarious majority.

Mr Ashby was given a warm welcome by fellow MPs as he took his seat for Prime Minister's questions three hours after his trial ended like the final act of a Greek tragedy, with husband and wife left crying on opposite sides of an empty courtroom.

The jury took five hours to reach a majority verdict in favour of the Sunday Times, who claimed that Mr Ashby was a homosexual and was taking an affair with an Irish doctor, Claran Kilduff.

The newspaper's star witness was Mrs Ashby, who claimed her husband had confessed to her that he was a homosexual when they ended their 28-year-old marriage. She

sounded less certain after the court case.

Asked if she was convinced her husband was a homosexual, she said: "I don't know. It was up to the jury." In a prepared statement she said: "It gives me no pleasure to see my husband lose an expensive libel action. I hope that it will not have a terrible effect on him."

She ended by quoting the proverb "least said, soonest mended" but agreed to give interviews on conditions laid down by Sunday Times lawyer Alistair Brett that she should get prior sight of what was intended to be published.

Her husband, the MP for Leicestershire North-West, looked stunned by the verdict. He took refuge in the Inner Temple, barring the way to journalists, and later issued a two-line statement through his solicitor.

His costs will not be known until the taxation proceedings are complete, which can take six to nine months, but lawyers put the cost of a four-week libel trial at £150,000 to £200,000 for each side.

The Sunday Times used its own legal department, which may reduce the costs, and Mr Brett said he was sure editor John Witherow would be sensible about recovering costs. "We will have to show magnanimity in victory,"

Prisons 'must slash costs'

Alan Travis

THE new head of the Prison Service has told governors they must cut costs by 15 per cent over the next three years to close the gap with private prisons.

The disclosure came the day after an inspection team last month walked out of Holloway women's prison in north London because they were so appalled by the conditions. Their complaints included over-zealous security and prisoners being locked up for 23 hours a day.

The Prison Officers' Association warned the conditions would be repeated throughout the country unless budget cuts were halted.

Richard Tilt, the acting director general of the Prison Service, acknowledged there were likely to be other prisons which have such bad conditions that they will have to be baled out.

Janet King, the governor of Holloway jail, has been given the option of moving to another post within the Prison Service and will not face disciplinary action over the state of her prison. Home Office ministers have taken a "supportive attitude" towards the senior management of Britain's largest women's prison in the wake of the dramatic walkout by a team of government inspectors.

Holloway's grim story, page 8

In Brief

THE Government and medical establishment face pressure for clearer guidelines on patient consultation after a gynaecologist was cleared of illegally procuring an abortion on a woman who did not know she was pregnant.

BEEF sales dropped by 15 per cent in the four weeks to mid-December as 1.4 million households stopped buying beef as a result of fears that BSE might be transmitted to humans.

A GOVERNMENT inquiry cleared Monklands district council in Scotland of nepotism and political and religious bias in job appointments. The charges have dogged the Labour-controlled council for three years.

MOHAMMED AL-FAYED, the owner of Harrods, plans to set up his own newspaper after being thwarted in attempts to break into media ownership.

THE Millennium Commission threw out proposals for the £88 million Cardiff Bay Opera House as "too risky", provoking accusations of metropolitan snobbery and anti-Welsh bias.

ACCORDING to 1965 cabinet records, released this week, Harold Wilson was given a contemptuous brush-off by the US president, Lyndon Johnson, when he asked to have face to face consultations over Vietnam.

CHURCH leaders launched a swinging attack on the National Lottery, describing this week's £33 million roll-over jackpot as "obscene".

THE Prime Minister signalled his intention to reform arcane property laws that enable "unscrupulous" landlords to exploit tenants by demanding unjustified service charges and unfairly wriggling out of having to sell their freeholds.

A TRENAGER who took part in the mugging and stabbing of the husband of the Director of Public Prosecutions was sentenced to six years' youth custody.

SHAHID IQBAL, aged 22, a supermarket worker from Birmingham, faced charges of 10 attempted murders after shoppers and staff were stabbed in a random knife attack.

THREE workmen were killed and four others critically injured when an explosion tore through an engineering yard on Tyneside during pressure-testing of an offshore rig.

POLICE are hunting an armed gang who shot dead one man and injured two others who intervened to prevent what appears to have been an attempted street robbery in the St Paul's area of Bristol.

Why I had to leave the Tories

Emma Nicholson, the defecting MP, explains why she felt betrayed and lost within her own party

IT HAS NOT been easy for me to leave the Conservative party. My father and uncles were Conservative MPs, and I have many friends and colleagues that I shall miss. Yet I am quite clear that I have



Emma Nicholson campaigning in the 1992 general elections

done the right thing, for myself, for my constituents and, above all, for the country in joining the Liberal Democrats. Far from being overwhelmed by natural regrets, I now look forward with a sense of positive hope for the future, and a feeling of political ease at being able to say exactly what I think.

Any personal decision of this magnitude involves both "push" and "pull" factors. The contemporary Conservative party is increasingly unattractive to someone like myself, who identified so strongly with the old "One Nation" tradition. There is an increasing venom in the internal faction-fighting within the party, and an endless search for scapegoats: single mothers, asylum seekers, young people, ethnic minorities and many others are used as political targets by ministers seeking to deflect blame.

Moreover, the Government seems to have lost all sense of positive direction at a crucial time for the future of Britain. This is particularly true of the vital question of the development of a modern democratic Europe with Britain "at its heart". How ironic those words of John

Major's seem now in the light of the sorry saga of shilly-shallying on Europe that we have seen from the Government. I find that most of our continental European neighbours are in despair at the inability of the British government to rise above cheap flag-waving populism and get on with the real job of building the sort of Europe we want, including, in the not too distant future, complete economic and monetary union.

In a real sense, I feel that rather than my leaving the Conservative party of Winston Churchill, Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath, the modern harsh and uncaring Conservative party has left me.

Now as to the factors that have pulled me towards the Liberal Democrats: I am sure I am not alone in having Liberal as well as Conservative forebears — and I am clear that the Liberal Democrats have inherited that great liberal tradition of "conscience and reform". I have already mentioned Europe in which the Liberal Democrats have an impressive and absolutely consistent record of constructive engagement. But on other issues such as foreign affairs and international human rights, from Bosnia and the Middle East to Hong Kong, I have already found myself agreeing with Paddy Ashdown and his colleagues

Menzies Campbell and David Steel. And in Britain it is precisely the Liberal Democrats' mix of competitive free enterprise, long-term public investment, particularly in education, and social compassion that is a perfect fit for me.

I am convinced we need fundamental constitutional reform at all levels. We must cleanse the Augean stables at Westminster of the mess of patronage and special interests which do so much to discredit democracy. I was distressed at the Government's attitude to the Nolan report. Lobbying income must be declared. Quangos must be cleaned up. Parliament must work more openly and efficiently.

But the main thrust of reform must be to move power away from the centre and out to the localities of Britain, away from the state and towards the citizen and away from London to the nations and regions of Britain. I am convinced that the regeneration of our democracy depends upon empowering individuals, families and communities rather than attempting to put all power in the hands of the gentlemen of Whitehall and Westminster.

So I look to the future with the confidence of someone who believes that she can make a contribution of hope for the next century rather than being locked into the politics of the past. — *The Observer*

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Privatised regulators may face scrutiny from Nolan

Patrick Wintour

LORD Nolan's committee on standards in public life may now look at the powerful new breed of industry regulators, including the lottery industry's Peter Davis, Lord Nolan indicated last week.

The committee, which has already prompted sweeping reforms of rules for MPs, is investigating accountability in local public spending bodies such as grant-maintained schools and housing associations. It is due to complete that report by Easter.

The growing calls for an inquiry into the independent regulators reached a new pitch after Mr Davis accepted free flights from a major backer of lottery operator Camelot, against advice from the National Heritage Department. Virginia Bottomley, the Heritage Secretary, resisted calls for his dismissal.

Asked on BBC radio whether his committee would investigate the regulators, Lord Nolan replied: "We very well may. I can certainly say this, that the regulators... are holders of public office and, therefore, quite within our terms of reference."

"The suggestion has been made over the current case that it would be sensible to see in more detail what regulates the regulators, and to whom they are accountable."

Lord Nolan also expressed surprise at the public's cynicism over standards in public life. His postbag was mainly filled with letters about financial greed, but also about sexual misbehaviour. Asked what people said, he replied: "That the country was going to the dogs."

Lord Nolan's office stressed that no final decision had yet been made. It would examine the rules governing the regulators of the privatised industry regulators such as Ofwat, Ofstel and Ofgas. Each regulator has enormous power to determine competition pol-

Church stirs asylum row

Madeleine Bunting and Patrick Wintour

AN OVERTLY political welfare initiative has been launched by churches to provide feeding centres, soup runs and hostels for thousands of refugees as the Government axes benefits to asylum seekers this year.

Churches and agencies believe they could face a humanitarian disaster of highly vulnerable people including children and the elderly who will find themselves without shelter in the middle of winter.

A nationwide aid network is being prepared, with church halls used as daytime shelters, soup kitchens and advice centres.

In a sharp implicit criticism of government policy, church leaders have written to leading denominations in London, calling for volunteers to provide a network of trained co-ordinators.

In one letter, sent shortly before Christmas, the Bishop of Southwark, the Rt Rev Roy Williamson, urged congregations to protest to

their member of Parliament. Jonathan Lloyd, the Bishop of Southwark's social action officer, said the church was being forced to step into the breach: "If asylum seekers can't depend on the state to provide a safety net, then the church has to step in. Who else is there?"

The Bishop of Southwark said he had already heard of landlords and hostels rejecting refugees as tenants for fear that their housing benefit would be cut. The Government is proposing to remove all housing benefit and income support from all people who claim asylum after entering the UK, and from all people appealing against a decision to refuse asylum status.

The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, is on a two-week tour of India and Pakistan to review the granting of visas and to explain his plans to cut the number of asylum seekers from the two countries. He will also offer help to reduce the heroin trade.

Home Office officials insisted he was not making his visit to justify the Asylum and Immigration Bill.

New Zealand woos teachers

NEW Zealand has begun an advertising campaign in Britain to woo back hundreds of expatriate teachers staffing British classrooms, writes Donald MacLeod.

Up to 1,000 New Zealanders are estimated to be in British schools, particularly in London, as a way of financing travel to Europe on their "OE" — overseas experience.

Now the Wellington government, which has enjoyed a surplus of teachers for years, is calling them home to fulfil its promise to reduce class sizes. Advertising in London and Strathclyde has been aimed at New Zealanders, although British teachers are also being recruited.

Rising numbers of primary schoolchildren and the New Zealand government's target limit of 25 to a class mean an extra 1,000 teachers will be needed next year.

With Britain's Teacher Training Agency expressing concern about recruitment, London schools are bracing themselves for a rerun of the shortage in the late eighties as the easing of the recession opens up alternative jobs.

During the last shortage, the British authorities targeted qualified New Zealanders and Australians, who were often working in bars or on building sites, and even advertised at the Munich beer festival.

Headteachers have called on the School Teachers' Review Body to make a pay award that would avert a recruitment crisis.



TOP: ER-78-95- AFTER TOMMIE L. © Steve Bell 1995

Queen orders royal divorce

Guardian Reporters

THE QUEEN last month broke with royal protocol to disclose that she wished to see an "early divorce" between the Prince and Princess of Wales in a sensational announcement that capped a year that has arguably been more damaging for the monarchy than the *annus horribilis* of 1992.

Ending a month of speculation that began with the Princess of Wales's interview for Panorama on November 20, the Queen wrote a private letter to both the prince and princess expressing her anger and frustration at their continued public squabbling and demanding an immediate end to their marriage.

Buckingham Palace said that after considering the current turbulent situation "the Queen wrote to give her view that an early divorce is desirable". It added that the Queen was fully supported in her position by the Duke of Edinburgh.

It is understood that since the princess made her Panorama interview, the Prince of Wales has shared the view that an official termination of their relationship is desirable.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, was consulted before the letters were sent and agreed with their contents.

The Queen's outspoken comments pave the way for a divorce that could take place within a matter of weeks. Under normal divorce procedures, marriage terminations to which both parties agree take at least three months to fulfil, but this case is likely to be seen as an exceptional one for which procedures will be expedited.

The Queen's statement was doubly extraordinary because the protocol to which the palace adheres is that no comment is made on any matter impinging on the personal affairs of members of the royal family.

But the anger of the Queen has been widely known over the outspoken comments that the princess made to Panorama about her marriage and about the Prince of Wales prospects of becoming king. The princess cast doubt on his ability to cope with the stresses and tensions associated with occupying the throne.

In the Panorama interview, she said she did not want a divorce but had not discussed the matter with

her husband. She added: "Obviously we need clarity on the situation."

The Princess did not spend Christmas Day with the royal family, in contradiction of an earlier announcement that she would be at Sandringham as usual.

● The Princess's ambition to become a "goodwill ambassador" for Britain hit an unexpected snag, when she became the target of angry protests on the Caribbean island where she was holidaying, writes *Sue Quinn*.

The self-styled Queen of Hearts infuriated residents of Barbuda, who rallied at their town hall to complain about the closure of a public beach, to which they had been forbidden access for the sake of her privacy.

Police and officers of the Antigua and Barbuda Defence Force are reported to have declared the white sands near the island's exclusive K-Club resort a VIP-only zone to protect the princess against intrusion by the prying lenses of a posse of press photographers.

"Our beaches are open, we are free to do what we want on them, so we're not at all happy about this," said one resident, Natalie Nedd.

Gulf war general accuses MoD of 'disgraceful' role

David Fairhall

DEMANDS for an inquiry were made this week after General Sir Peter de la Billière, Britain's Gulf war commander, accused the Ministry of Defence of "disgraceful interference" in his conduct of the campaign, and of causing deaths among RAF pilots by insisting on low-level bombing.

David Clark, the shadow defence secretary, said: "This inquiry must be top-level, urgent and penetrating. These comments give rise to grave alarm and despondency at the alleged role of the MoD."

In a forthcoming BBC television documentary on the fifth anniversary of the war, the general shows himself primarily concerned to avoid unnecessary casualties — even refusing a proposal from General Norman Schwarzkopf, the US overall commander, to attack Britain's 1st Armoured Division to the US Marines in a frontal assault on the Iraqis' main defences.

He insisted instead on an outflanking manoeuvre for which his tanks were better suited. He says he was also quick to suggest a change in RAF low-level bombing tactics when four Tornados were lost in as many days.

US aircraft bombed from medium altitude with few losses.

In the BBC series, the Gulf commander accuses "one particular senior officer in the MoD" of refusing to endorse a change of tactics because of its implications for the RAF's Nato strategy. Sir Peter regarded this as disgraceful interference in what should have been the prerogative of the local commander.

The RAF did switch to medium-level laser-guided bombing. But not in time to prevent the captured crew of a Tornado being dragged before Iraqi TV cameras. That humiliation struck deep. Its effects have resurfaced four years on in a £650 million RAF programme to develop a new ground-attack weapon known as Cusom (Conventionally Armed Stand-off Missile).

The operational requirement specifies that aircraft like the Tornado, the Harrier and the Eurofighter 2000, must be able to launch the missile at an enemy airfield from at least 125 miles. Seven firms are bidding for the contract.

In the series, Lady Thatcher says that she still believed the Iraqis were bluffing. She would have urged the US president to press on to Baghdad.

During the surrender negotiations at Safwan, in the southern Iraq, I asked General de la Billière why the allies stopped short of pursuing the Iraqis, either north towards Baghdad or eastwards into Basra.

He replied that strategic factors apart, allied troops had lost their appetite for shooting a retreating enemy in the back.

Link in student murder hunt

Alex Bollos

DETECTIVES investigating the death of Celine Figard, a French hitchhiker found murdered in a Worcestershire lay-by, are considering possible links with previous killings.

The 19-year-old accountancy student's naked body was found last week, 10 days after she was last seen accepting a lift from a lorry driver at a service station near Newbury, Berkshire.

Chief Superintendent John McCannott of West Mercia police, who is leading the inquiry, said: "There are several cases around the country where naked women have been found adjacent to major roads with similar injuries. We are in contact with other forces. There is one case in particular — that of Tracy Turner — where the victim was picked up at a service station, that we will be looking at."

Ms Turner, aged 32, was last seen

A year ago the miners bought Tower Colliery in South Wales. They were told it was unviable. Now it's in profit. John Mullin celebrates the pit that wouldn't close

A shaft of light in a dying valley

WARM and bright they glowed in the cold South Wales night, cheery Christmas bulbs on top of the pit-head. The workers used to be refused permission to put them up. But that was back then, and the men and women of Tower Colliery no longer need heed bosses' humbug.

In the pubs and workers' clubs of Hirwaun and Aberdare, the miners of Tower were having back the drink. They were celebrating the festive season and the most astonishing year in the long history of the last deep mine in South Wales.

They own the mine now, and equally. They did what they were told was impossible: to post a profit. This year they will announce pre-tax profits of £2.1 million on £15.7 million turnover. There are 246 of them. Each is worker and capitalist. At the only coal pit in the world of its type. Once they were informed their dream could never be achieved, Michael Heseltine, the then Industry Secretary, and British Coal, called the pit "unviable". There were problems with seismic surveys, they were told.

None had a degree in geology, it was true. But they knew their mine. Many had worked at the coal-face for 30 years and more. There was, they knew, no doubt of its potential. The politicians and managers changed tack. There was, the miners were informed, no market for the anthracite they produced. It might be the finest of all coals, but who, they were asked with patronising rhetoric, would want to buy it these days?

And so Tower, the last in a region which once employed 270,000, was to be consigned to the history books. The colliery closed in April 1994. British Coal executives, after months of shifting goalposts, and shenanigans too depressing to detail, signed the pit's death warrant. But the miners thought they could see the hand of government pulling at the puppet strings. Never mind that the workers had met increasingly fraught output targets. Or that they had earned profits of £28 million in three years.

It was a decision which had Tyrone O'Sullivan, aged 50, in tears. He had been National Union of Mineworkers' lodge secretary for 22 years, and he was driving back after the last meeting with British Coal. He was required to sign those forms, but refused. An NUM official for South Wales filled in for him. "It broke my heart that night. Twenty-eight years I had been at this pit."

There were five members of the Tower Lodge at the meeting in Newport. They were summoned there immediately after the workers voted to close the pit following threats from British Coal to cut redundancy terms. They decided on a consolation drink as they returned home. They nipped into the Full Moon in Aberman.

"We had a few drinks, and then we phoned our families and got them down." It was then that the Tower miners hatched the plan which would provide a new beginning. And so they set to work, bring-



All work and real pay... Tower installation deputy Brian Lundregan does his paperwork at the end of a shift while, below, miners wait at the pithead for their shift to begin

ing an estimated £10 million to the devastated Cynon Valley. Male employment is around one in three. Wage rates are horrendously depressed: the job centre in Aberdare advertised recently for a security guard at an hourly rate of £1.50 (£2.30). And any applicant had to supply his own dog.

To succeed in its task the NUM lodge would have to count on the strong spirit of the Tower workforce: Tower had long had a reputation as staunchly socialist — indeed many around here believe that is why the authorities are so keen to close it down. It was a citadel for workers' solidarity. Its miners took part in the Merthyr riots of 1831, the first to fly the red flag. No one is quite sure if it was a cow, sheep or goat that was sacrificed to dye a white sheet.

The miners remember with awe how William Richards, then the leading union official at the pit, went to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He died in 1936. Death was never far away: asking around the Penywaun social club and every fourth bingo player had lost a father, an uncle or a grandfather. One dreadful day in October 1962 nine men were killed in an explosion.

O'Sullivan has seen 14 men die within arm's length. His father was killed in June 1963 in a roof collapse. His great grandfather and two great uncles died on the same day in 1886.

The deaths, the banter, and the political history all shaped Tower. Its own nickname is Little Moscow. O'Sullivan, drawing from US journalist John Reed's account of that turning point in history, called his diary of the demise of Tower in its previous incarnation: *Fourteen Days That Shook The World*. He

They concentrated on respected figures. The coup was to secure Philip Weeks, former director of the National Coal Board in South Wales, as chairman. (He had resigned in protest at Ian McGregor's closure programme after the miners' strike a decade ago.) Weeks was delighted to help out. Next came what Heseltine suggested would be tricky: to secure buyers for the coal. They estimated they would produce 395,000 tons a year.

Provisional contracts for up to five years were drawn up, and after production began, another was signed with British Steel, the first time that organisation has bought any British coal in 10 years.

But there was, again contrary to Heseltine's predictions, no shortage of private companies prepared to take Tower a go. At one point a dozen firms were preparing bids. Tower Employee Buy-Out (Tebco) strengthened its hand by going back to its shareholders, the workforce. They were each asked for a further £5,000, and virtually everybody paid up.

O'Sullivan, who worked 16-hour days to put the deal together, was at an NUM meeting in Barnsley when news came through that Tebco had been confirmed as preferred bidder. "I had to get back. I knew I wouldn't make it to the pub, but I just wanted home. I drove all the way in the inside lane. I was saying to myself: 'Now Ty, don't die tonight.' I walked into the house in darkness. But everyone was waiting up for me after the pub. It was a lovely moment."

The sale was completed on December 23, 1994. O'Sullivan sat signing documents for three hours. The last was to confirm the change in ownership of 200 pairs of Wellington boots. And then he handed over a cheque for £1 million.

Tebco formally took control at one minute past midnight on Christmas Eve. The team went up to the pit, whisky bottles in hand. It was a cold and frosty night, but clear. They had a party in the yard, and toasted the future.

None had any doubt that they could make it work, but they have exceeded expectations. Miners say morale has never been higher. Pit deputy Brian Lundregan, aged 38, said there is much less wastage. "Everyone knows that if something

is saved it's more for us, our families and the community. There is none of the reluctance there used to be when the boys were asked to do something.

"It really is a fantastic pit. I was away from it for 20 months, and it was the worst time of my life. I love the camaraderie."

The miners are paid up to £403 a week, depending on the job. The basic is higher than in the old days, though there is less scope for overtime. Each worker this year received a £500 payment out of profits.

The management system is different, too. Workers are consulted about all decisions. Ann Clwyd, MP for Cynon Valley, who stayed down the pit for 27 hours in April 1994 without food or water in an attempt to persuade British Coal to keep it open, said the miners' victory had electrified one of the UK's most deprived areas. "This is the first time we have had what we regard as a victory over the Government in all these years. It has given us both hope and belief."

It has given a similar boost to people throughout the country, says O'Sullivan, who presented President Clinton with a Tower Colliery tie when he met him at an international union meeting in New York last month. His office is festooned with cards. One, from Felicity Smith, of Stroud, Gloucestershire, reads: "It just goes to show what courage and determination can achieve."

There is also a copy of the 10 socialist commandments on his wall. Number Eight reads: "Observe and think in order to discover the truth. Do not believe what is contrary to reason, and never deceive yourself or others." It can be regarded as the miners' guiding principle — but there is an irony. O'Sullivan, now personnel director, said: "What I hate about this is that we have given privatisation of coal a friendly face and good name. Never mind that 100,000 miners have lost their jobs. That really marks me."

The miners say that Tower has a long-term future. A new seam opens in April and plans are in place for another. The team wants to maximise jobs, not profits. They say they have never been opposed to profits. "It's just what you go with them," Roberts said.



Lottery comes up to scratch in an instant

John Ezard

THE WORDS "instant", "scratchcard" and "rollover" are to go into new editions of the three main dictionaries — Oxford, Collins and Chambers — it was announced last week.

The National Lottery organisers, Camelot, rejoiced at how quickly they had become a national institution. Yet they are still dwarfed in popularity by other more caustic buzz-words and phrases of life in the mid-1990s.

The runaway winner was "sleaze" — even more favoured as a term about politics in 1995 than it was in 1994, when the MPs' cash-for-questions row began.

Some phrases have kept a currency which began earlier in the decade — reflecting how little the British economy has changed in the 1990s. But

"road rage" and "spin doctor" have come virtually out of nowhere to high places in the list, which is compiled from the Financial Times' electronic Profile database. It holds the text of all British broadsheet newspapers and some tabloids as far back as 1982.

Partly thanks to the Nolan inquiry, "sleaze" cropped up around 5,400 times last year, 30 per cent more often than in 1994. Second favourite, with nearly 3,000 entries, was the environment cliché "sustainable", made fashionable by the 1992 Earth Summit.

Next were "negative equity" (1,503 entries, more than in 1993 or 1994), "information superhighway", a noun virtually non-existent two years ago (1,450 entries), "felony" (761), "road rage" (486), "defining moment" (417) and "spin doctor" (412). "Scratchcard" (401) was

ninth, followed by "mindset" (261), with "rollover" (255) eleventh. "Instant" is too common a word to single out from the database.

Among other terms coming up on the inside track as possible favourites for this year are "on the cusp" (255), "gangsta" (210), and "jungle music" (58). One curious colnage, "epiphany", was published 187 times. The novelist James Joyce adapted this Christian word in 1916 to mean "a sudden spiritual manifestation... the most delicate and evanescent of moments". Now it is most commonly used to indicate "I quite enjoyed that film/pop record/soap opera". But the word-of-mouth fashion for other recent phrases from TV or royal soap operas such as "I'll always be there for you" or "There were three of us in this marriage", is unsearchable by computer.

Judges review right to die

THE first right-to-die case in Scotland is to be considered by the country's three senior judges because of the importance of the legal issues it raises.

Lord Cameron of Loch Broom told the Court of Session in Edinburgh last month that he would not be issuing a judgment, after nearly 3 days of evidence and legal argument. Instead he is to make a report for the Inner House of senior judges to consider.

It means a delay in any decision on Janet Johnstone, who has been in a coma for nearly four years.

Law Hospital NHS trust in Lanarkshire is seeking a declaration that it would be lawful for it to stop artificially feeding Mrs Johnstone, aged 52, who doctors say is in a vegetative state with no hope of recovery.

The Lord Advocate, Lord Mackay of Drumadoon, said it was not his intention to frustrate the doctors, but he had to ensure that it was legally competent. This was only fair to doctors and relatives of the patient.

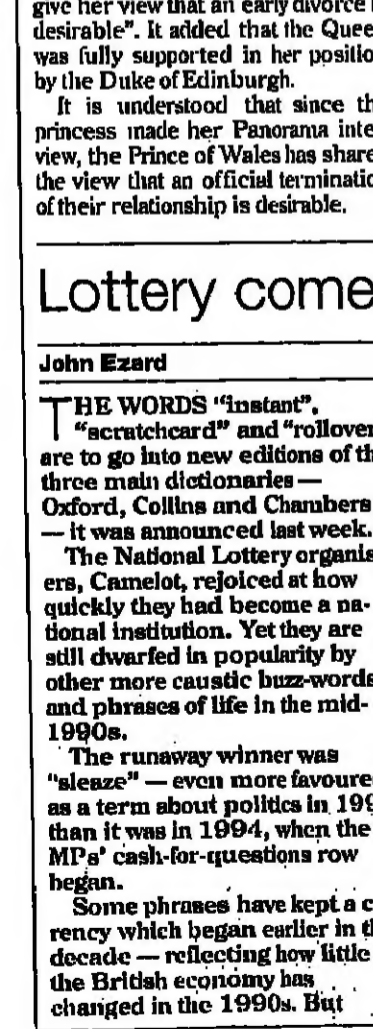
If the court could not grant permission in a case like that, then it was a matter for Parliament. Scotland was now out of step with England, where the House of Lords had ruled on the case of the Hillsborough victim Tony Bland. Lord Mackay said.

alive at a service station on the M6 in Staffordshire in March 1994. Her naked body was found in a ditch near Bitteswell, Leicestershire.

Celine was travelling from France to visit her cousin, who works as a head waiter at a hotel in the New Forest. The investigation, using 88 officers from three forces, has still failed to trace the ginger-haired driver who gave Celine a lift in his white Mercedes lorry at Chieveley service station on the M4.

A police spokesman said there were 1,200 similar lorries registered across the country but he was confident the driver would be found. "Whether or not he is Celine's killer is another matter."

Concern about nine similar murders in the Midlands over the past few years led to officers meeting early last year to discuss the possibility of a connection. Detectives admitted there were similarities, but subsequently dismissed any formal links.



Apocalyptic vision results in tragedy

Henri Tincq traces the origins of the Order of the Solar Temple after last month's apparent second suicide ritual involving 16 of its members and, below, looks at the difficulty of legislating to control sects

IF THE lives of those who belonged to the Order of the Solar Temple were no more than a "performance", then clearly their deaths had to be too. Interestingly, they were not in the habit of referring to death as death, but preferred to call it a "great journey" or "a transit", convinced as they were that they belonged to a select élite — the "Great White Lodge" — that was destined to break away from the hateful modern world and attain, in the great invisible, higher states of consciousness. A recurring theme in their speeches and thoughts was the imminence of "the Apocalypse".

The Order of the Solar Temple has connections with New Age philosophy, and advocates practices based on natural medicine, strict rules governing diet and hygiene, yoga and ecology (biological farms), all of which are seen as ways of surviving until "the Apocalypse" occurs. In the early eighties Luc Joutet, a Belgian homeopathic doctor practising in Annemasse, in the Haute-Savoie *département*, tried to seize control of what was then known as the Reformed Order of the Temple, following the death of its "grand master", José Origas. Joutet had given up traditional medicine and spent all his time travelling and visiting healers, even as far afield as the Philippines.

In his quest for what he de-

scribed as "a synthesis capable of caring for man in his totality", which would combine the therapeutic (the doctor), Joutet had attempted in various ways to renew the legendary Order of the Temple, whose grand master Jacques de Molay had been burnt at the stake in 1814 at the behest of Philip the Fair.

In 1984, Joutet broke with the Reformed Order of the Temple and founded the Knightly International order of the Solar Tradition. He also ran societies with names like Archedia or Amenta, and travelled widely in Switzerland, France and Canada giving lectures and seminars.

Joutet, who was young (he was born in 1947) and smooth-talking, mesmerised audiences with his scientific and medical knowledge and his grasp of traditional forms of wisdom. He built up a band of faithful followers who went to listen to him in Geneva, Lausanne and the South of France. They consisted mainly of affluent technicians, doctors and people working in the arts. A majority of them were women.

Joutet tried out his favourite themes, such as the imminent and total transmutation of mankind as it entered the age of Aquarius. "We live in the reign of fire," he told Swiss radio listeners in 1987. "We are making a leap into macro-evolution. Our brains will undergo subtle and vibratory physical changes,



Prophet of doom... Luc Joutet built up a band of faithful followers consisting mainly of affluent professionals

which will mean that man will respond to events in a different way." Joutet jizzed up such familiar New Age talk with his own philosophy of the Temple, "a celestial archetype which brings together men and women capable of mobilising themselves and serving".

But Joutet could not have turned the Order of the Solar Temple into what it became without the help of Joseph Di Mambro, a shady figure also from the Annemasse region, where he worked as a healer. One

of their favourite devices was to force their followers to find figures in antiquity of whom they were the reincarnation. The wheeze became an obsession, and soon resulted in the physical, psychological and financial manipulation that were to become the sect's hallmark.

Thierry Huguénin — who should have been the 54th person to die in the wave of collective suicides in October 1994 that included the names of both Joutet and Di Mambro themselves in the list of dead —

describes in his book *Le 54ème* the succession of ordeals organised by Di Mambro in his bid to achieve his initiatory quest: followers were woken up in the middle of the night, kept constantly on the move from one place to another, subjected to Draconian rules of hygiene (their homes had to be disinfected daily), and forced to follow a Spartan vegan diet. "We were in a state of total disorientation that allowed him to get us to believe anything," wrote Huguénin, whose wife Nathalie became a latterday Queen of Atlantis. Another woman was pronounced to be the reincarnation of Queen Baphseput, and a third the wife of the centurion Claudius, who pierced Jesus's side. Di Mambro kept sect members in a state of collective hallucination.

He visited "grand masters" who were living in hiding in Zurich, organised ritual ceremonies and talked enthusiastically about "revelations", "miracles" and "apparitions". He was the person who invented the "passports to eternity" and the "survival homes" that would enable followers to escape to "the Apocalypse".

The question that bothers experts in such matters is: why did Di Mambro and Joutet decide to bring forward the date of "the Apocalypse"? Their names had begun to be talked about in the context of matter that had nothing to do with the sect, Di Mambro's in connection with financial swindles, and Joutet's with arms trafficking in Canada.

Did they decide to "give as good as they got" and restore the illusion of a whiter-than-white Order of the Solar Temple by playing out the Apocalypse and enacting a collective suicide? It was certainly a very straightforward operation to organise, since members of the sect had long since yielded up their minds and their freedom to the two evil geniuses.

(December 26)

Prophets in search of a congregation

THERE had been plenty of warnings, from distraught families, opinion pollsters, members of parliament and researchers, that prophets of doom would proliferate in the run-up to 2000. It was clear that, with the collapse of centuries-old ideologies, the waning influence of established churches, the breaking up of the social fabric and the crisis of moral values, the world was going to become a "supermarket" of beliefs and creeds.

Even in a Catholic country like France, books on the esoteric sell more copies than books on Christianity. With its collective trances and invocations of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostalism has spread like wildfire through the overcrowded cities of the Third World. We are told by believers that mankind will shortly see the dawn of a New Age of spiritual and planetary consciousness, as a result of our entering the age of Aquarius.

An increasing number of syncretic groups like the Order of the Solar Temple thus find themselves caught up in a kind of mystico-esoteric constellation based on ancient or obscure traditions, esoteric, alternative practices (in medicine, for example), communal living and "transpersonal" psychology. Together they form the ingredients of a new counter-culture for the nineties, chiefly notable for the protean and heterodox nature of the beliefs concerned.

This is an area where the legislator bears a heavy responsibility,

Even if one restricts oneself to the situation in France, it is increasingly difficult to distinguish, when faced with such a ragbag of modern beliefs, between the so-called "recognised religions", religions which are not recognised but enjoy a certain status (thanks to the "church associations" provided for by the 1905 law on the separation of church and state), and sects which have no legal status at all (such as the Church of Scientology or Jehovah's Witnesses) but which lay claim to the status provided for by the legislation of 1905 and, to ally suspicion, appoint "ministers" of religion and call themselves "new religious movements" or "minority religions".

After the latest "collective suicide" of the Order of the Solar Temple in the Vercors mountains, public opinion and the media were quick to clamour for a blanket ban on sects. But things are not as simple as that. It has to be remembered that elementary principles of law, such as the right of association and freedom of worship and of expression, are at stake here.

A number of key questions need to be answered: what objective criteria can be applied to determine whether a group or association is a sect of not, or whether it is dangerous or harmless? Is there not a risk, when the term "sect" is used, that philosophical or religious movements may be discredited purely on the grounds that they are minority groups, or that their teachings are

unconventional? And while it is clear that sects, in the fullest sense of the term, do exist, it is hard to decide whether the best way of combating them is to introduce specific legislation, or merely to tighten up the law's existing preventive arsenal.

The first phase of action by the French government came with the Vivien Report, which was commissioned by Pierre Mauroy's government in 1982 and published two years later. It called on the police, magistrates, schools and the media to exercise the greatest possible degree of vigilance. But in the past 10 years, following the mushrooming of groups with religious pretensions, and incidents such as those at Waco and now in the Vercors, and child abuse in the Mandarom sect, which is also based in France, the problem has taken on an altogether different dimension.

IN 1992 the Council of Europe, noting that freedom of conscience and of religion, which was guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights, made any substantial legislation on sects problematic. It did, however, advocate educational and legislative measures to prevent abuse.

Since it is impossible to ban sects, or even to pass legislation on them, the full range of already existing repressive measures, in civil, criminal, fiscal and social law, needs to be strictly applied. What exactly is the available arsenal of legislation? The

Bouchet Commission on human rights, set up in December 1993, called for a tight control of profits made by sects, as laid down by the law on church associations, and for a strict application of legislation on financial and accounting transparency. A pragmatic solution was proposed, as illustrated recently by an agreement between Jehovah's Witnesses and the defence ministry. Jehovah's Witnesses, who refuse to do any kind of military service, can now perform a civilian form of service without qualifying as conscientious objectors.

But such arguments don't cut much ice with the various groups which help victims of sects, and which themselves have some solid arguments to draw on. They contend that such legal and regulatory provisions are inadequate, since they can be evaded and are anyway impossible to enforce.

And then there is the question of the connivance which — rightly or wrongly — sects are thought to enjoy in the upper echelons of the various civil service departments concerned.

Anti-sect organisations argue that while it is fairly easy to identify and, if need be, to prosecute financial fraud, public disorder or infringement of the law governing the protection of minors, it is virtually impossible to prove that individuals have suffered the kind of mental manipulation reported by people who have managed to escape the Order of the Solar Temple.

What is more, sects are rich enough to hire battalions of lawyers, who twist the law in their favour,

snarl up the legal process by resorting to delaying tactics, carry out intimidatory manoeuvres, institute libel actions (often against the press), and impugn witnesses.

In other words, in the eyes of the defence associations and politicians who have been crusading against sects, French law is ill-equipped to deal with the illegal and sometimes tragic activities of sects.

This is an old debate, but it has been given fresh urgency by the need for preventive measures. An increasing number of specialists now believe that such measures will need to encourage, from school age onwards, a genuinely new and open approach towards the culture and history of religions, the aim being to create greater awareness and to prompt comparison.

Somewhere between the set-up in Italy or Germany, where religious classes are the rule, and the situation in France, where such education is virtually non-existent, there is probably a third way. If it were found, it would have the merit of showing that preventive action against sects can start at a very early age, and that the government had at last decided to make it one of its priorities.

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The Washington Post

Returning to an Uncertain Future

How can the international community guarantee the safe repatriation of refugees in Rwanda and Bosnia, asks Iain Guest



Peace offerings... residents of the former besieged city of Sarajevo jostle for Christmas gifts handed out by Icelandic volunteers

EARLY this year the international community will start encouraging more than 4 million uprooted people to return and resettle in Rwanda and Bosnia. Given that both countries are synonymous with genocide, the question needs to be asked whether this is necessary, safe or wise.

In broad terms, the answer must be yes. The essence of ethnic cleansing was violent, forcible expulsion. There will be no peace for these damaged countries unless the victims are allowed to return, if not to their original homes then at least to a site of their choice in their country.

At the same time, conditions hardly seem propitious for a mass return. Croat militia began burning Serb houses in Bosnia before the ink was dry on the Dayton agreement.

In Rwanda, there is such anger about war criminals being at large among Hutu refugees outside the country that returning Hutu are subject to arrest. Here is the stark dilemma of contemporary refugee protection: On the one hand, the international community must take advantage of political openings like the Dayton agreement, and get refugees out of camps and back home. On the other hand, this has to be done without endangering lives. How can both goals be achieved?

Under a 1951 convention, refugees who flee persecution have the right to seek asylum and not be turned away. The international community has made no comparable, legally binding commitment to protect them once they return. In spite of this, in the last five years at least 9 million refugees have gone back to countries that were also once wracked by violence and persecution. These include Burma, Afghanistan, Vietnam, South Africa, Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador and Mozambique.

The vast majority have returned safely, and there is little to suggest they have been systematically targeted for persecution after returning. It can also be argued that conditions back home will never seem totally ripe for return, and that opportunities must be created and exploited.

This case is convincingly made in the latest State of the World's Refugees, recently issued by Sadako Ogata, the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. As one of the United Nation's most effective

agency heads, Ogata's preference is for practical, and ideally, preventive solutions. Ogata has urged governments to endorse the "right to remain" and "the right to return." Her agency has assumed the burden of assisting more than 5 million persons who have been uprooted by war but forced to remain within their countries' borders.

The most complete (and in some ways reassuring) example of Ogata's proactive approach occurred in Cambodia in 1992. Following the Paris peace agreement of October 1991, Cambodia, like Rwanda and Bosnia today, was a dark and brooding land of ghosts, graves and land mines.

Yet UNHCR grasped the nettle and, by starting repatriation on a modest scale, was ultimately able to provide sufficient reassurance to encourage 360,000 Cambodian refugees to return home from Thailand.

Dayton promises to take this one important step further. UNHCR insisted that an annex on refugees be added to the agreement. Sensibly enough, the first to be resettled when repatriation starts next spring will be the 1.3 million internally displaced Bosnians, on the argument that they are the most vulnerable. They will be reassured — and hopefully protected — by 60,000 NATO troops and UNHCR repatriation monitors.

Yet the Dayton plan still makes huge assumptions. So much blood has been shed creating ethnically

pure regions that it will clearly not be possible to rebuild a completely multi-ethnic state. People will have to leave to make way for returnees and new arrivals. Partners in a mixed marriage who return to a particular ethnic area could have a particularly tense homecoming.

Nor is it clear whether the reconstruction plans currently under discussion for Bosnia will provide a lasting foundation for the safe reintegration of the returning refugees.

Here the precedent of Cambodia is discouraging. In spite of a massive \$3 billion effort by the United Nations and internationally supervised elections, some of those who returned home have been displaced by fighting; others have failed to turn their repatriation grant into a lasting investment; more have probably stepped on land mines in 1995 than in 1992. But all this, sadly, is also the fate of Cambodians who never left.

If this casts a shadow over the Bosnian resettlement, it screams out a warning in distant Rwanda, which is viewed with nothing like the same urgency in Western capitals. Some 1.2 million Hutu refugees in Zaire were given until the end of 1995 to return home. The deadline is being quietly revised, but the threat of a massive push-back from Zaire early this year remains real.

This reveals an international community that is still groping, as it struggles to move from peacekeeping to reconstruction. The establishment of two war-crimes tribunals on

Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia is an important start because it recognizes the acting need for justice in these countries where law was abandoned.

It is now time to apply the same thinking to repatriation. The reintegration of refugees has been built into several recent peace plans, but there needs to be more consistency and clarity about the safeguards.

There will be no large-scale return of Hutu refugees to Rwanda in its present state; yet donors are unlikely to make a generous commitment to reconstruction unless they see refugees returning home. The best way to break this circle is to concentrate on essentials inside Rwanda, starting with reform of the justice system and punishment of war criminals. Outside the country, in the camps, UNHCR must be given room to create the initiatives that have become its hallmark under Ogata. This might start the process of returns on a manageable scale.

Forcing the peace will do irreparable damage to UNHCR's core mandate — to defend asylum. Even worse, it could trigger a recurrence of the madness in Rwanda. That this is even a remote possibility shows that we are still very close to the edge, for all the achievements of recent years.

Iain Guest is a senior fellow at the Washington-based Refugee Policy Group. He served as the UNHCR spokesman in Cambodia in 1992.

Action Urged On Trade in Illegal Aliens

William Branigin

IN A report to President Clinton, an interagency working group on the smuggling of illegal aliens to the United States has painted a grim picture of what it calls a "growing trade in human cargo" and recommended a more aggressive global effort to combat it.

The report, the result of a nine-month study by officials of the State Department, Justice Department, Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), Coast Guard, CIA and FBI, describes widespread official corruption and lax law enforcement in several countries as facilitating the flow of hundreds of thousands of people through highly lucrative smuggling pipelines that often lead to the United States. A copy of the report, which was sent to the president in November, was obtained by The Washington Post.

Viewed globally, trafficking in illegal migrants is an enormous problem, the study says. "This growing trade in human cargo earns smugglers billions of dollars in annual profits" and is "made possible by staggering levels of official corruption." The report recommends dealing with alien-smuggling "at its source, as well as in those transit countries through which migrants are moved to the United States."

Since alien-smuggling is a crime in only a few countries and penalties tend to be minimal, many trafficking organizations "operate with near impunity," the report says. In addition to being suborned by smugglers, it adds, authorities in some countries are reluctant to fight the trade because they view it as a "victimless crime."

Of particular concern lately has been the growth of Europe as "a major gateway to the United States for illegal migration and alien smuggling," in part because of the reduction of border controls and the collapse of strong central authority in the former communist states, the report says. Up to 500,000 illegal aliens enter Western Europe each year, with a similar number waiting in states of Central Europe and the former Soviet Union, and many "will eventually attempt to illegally enter the United States," the report says.

In Central America, all seven of the region's countries have been used to funnel people north to the United States, often overland through Mexico. The annual smuggling traffic includes an estimated 100,000 people from outside the region and 200,000 to 300,000 Central Americans, the report says.

In China, where alien-smuggling has become highly organized and enormously profitable, trafficking gangs succeed in moving up to 50,000 people a year to the United States at fees of up to \$35,000 each, the study says. Most arrive by commercial aircraft, typically in small groups with fraudulent documents.

The report criticizes Taiwan for "unsatisfactory" cooperation against alien smugglers. Despite repeated U.S. requests, Taiwan has failed to halt the use of its ships for smuggling and has not made alien-trafficking a crime, the report says.

Canadians Seek Closer Ties With Chile

Anne Swardson in Toronto

CANADA and Chile have announced that they will begin bilateral negotiations to reach a free-trade accord, a move designed to fill the gap left when the U.S. Congress failed to approve efforts to include Chile in the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Canadian Trade Minister Roy MacLaren said: "This agreement will provide a bridge to a full

NAFTA accession for Chile and will be folded into the NAFTA once the accession negotiations are eventually completed."

If the negotiations succeed, Canada will gain an advantage in South America's healthiest economy — especially if there are further delays in American participation in an expanded NAFTA. The bilateral talks are to begin this month.

"The specter of the United States hung over last week's announce-

ment in several ways. For one, Congress so far has not ratified streamlined authority for negotiations to include Chile in NAFTA, which the Clinton administration had hoped would happen in 1995. The Mexican financial crisis, Republican concern about side agreements on labor and the environment, and Democratic concern about possible job losses from free trade have served to undermine congressional enthusiasm for allowing Chile into NAFTA.

Canadian and Chilean officials are assuming no progress will be made on expanding the tripartite accord until 1997, after the elections. Sen. Robert J. Dole, R-Kan., a presidential candidate, wants to go slow on free-trade expansion.

The discussions with Chile are just the latest effort that Prime Minister Jean Chrétien has made to broaden Canada's trading networks. Last year, he led a 250-person trade delegation to six countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In Chile alone, some \$1.2 billion worth of deals were signed.

Notes & Queries Joseph Harker

WHO FIRST realised the need for an international dateline, and what problems arose in its delineation? THE NEED for an international dateline could have been recognised by any culture which knew the Earth was round...

I WAS recently beset by flies from the moment I entered a local wood until I reached the other side, when they vanished. Were the same flies with me throughout, or do they work in relays?

HOW LONG after the American Revolution and the War of 1812 did it take for Britain and the United States to become friends again?

THE distinction should first be made between friendship and alliance. The burning of the White House, and the Cotton Kings' support of the South in the Civil War...

THE WORD "tragedy" originates from the Greek words tragos (goat) + oide (song). How did the modern meaning evolve?

HAVE YOU heard a goat sing? — Marcus Rooms, Clapton, London

GREEK tragedies were known as "goat-songs" because the prize in Athenian tragedy competitions was a live goat. These contests were sacred to Dionysos...

HAVE heard that if you go to the bottom of a very deep well and look at the sky you will see the star directly above, even in broad daylight. Is this true?

SOME 20 years ago a cliff-fall at Birling Gap, near Eastbourne, revealed a well dug by the Beaker people to serve a defensive settlement. At first the sea eroded just the bottom section...

INITIALLY a fiasco is what you buy chianti in, so how did it acquire the English meaning which gets so much use nowadays?

THE WORD fiasco was first used and spread by the French writer Stendhal. The official etymology refers to the word "bottle" in a figurative meaning...

WOULD suggest that the consumption of a couple of fiascos would make this perfectly clear. — Patrick Blanchard, Victoria, Australia

IN ITALIAN a fiasco is a straw-covered round bottle. The figurative meaning — a flop, a failure — is also used in the Italian language...

Any answers?

WHENCE came the Christmas cracker and its fancy hats and silly riddles? — F Paul Taylor, Frodsham, Cheshire

HAS there ever been a scientific study of astrology with regards to its ability or otherwise to define personal characteristics? — Guy Evans, Derby

WHAT is it that makes a song catchy? — Mike Levan, Wakefield, Yorkshire

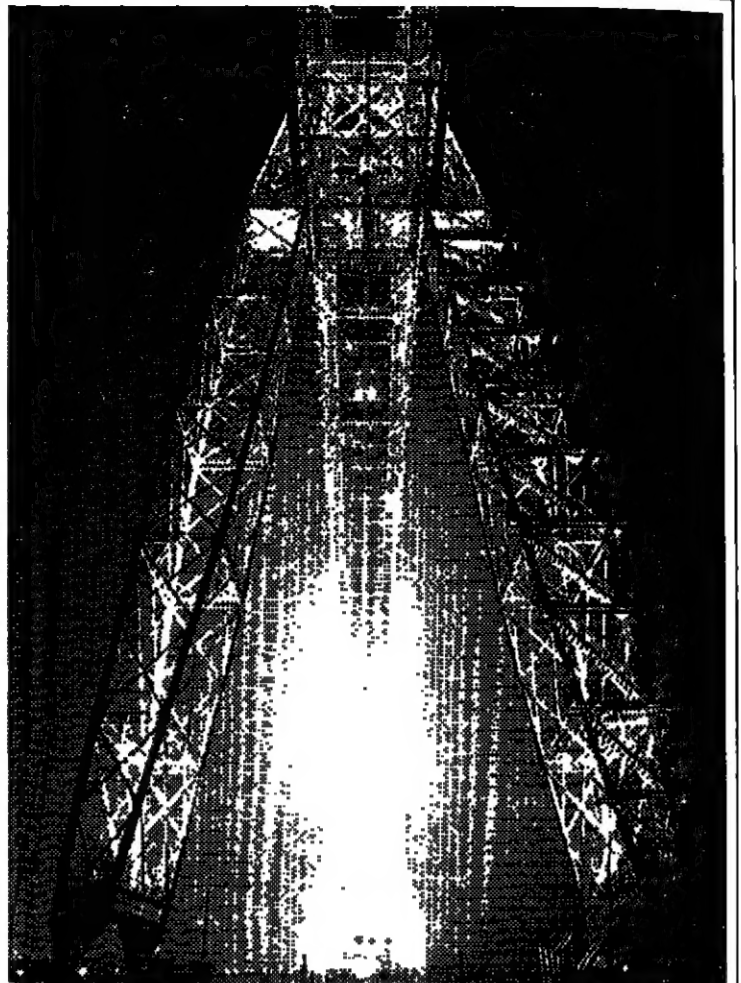
Answers should be e-mailed to weekly@guardian.co.uk, faxed to 0171/44171-242-0985, or posted to The Guardian Weekly, 75 Farringdon Road, London EC1M 3HQ

A Country Diary

Peter Squibb warbler has graced us with its secretive presence for three late autumns, co-habiting with the inevitable robin. Chattering long-tailed finches energetically search the pines...

air with their hollow echoing warbles. At evening they compete with the swallows and martins disassembling the sky. Several times in the burning afternoon a short-eared eagle has hovered overhead dangling its talons.

It was not until the full orchestra joined in that we realised that these were no less than the soloists of Brasilia's free summer concert. The orchestra consists of millions of cicadas. Some very large trees have a whole orchestra of their own...



Lightening the load... Newport Transporter Bridge has reopened after a £3 million refurbishment. Cars are carried across the River Usk in a cradle suspended from the structure. PHOTOGRAPH JEFF MORGAN

Letter from Brazil Mark Latham

THE CRICKET season has come again to Brasilia. As in England this coincides with the start of rainy weather but, here in Brasilia, the season unfortunately has nothing to do with bat and ball.

Brasilia is a strange city, created some 35 years ago in the middle of this vast country to be a new capital inspiring development of the neglected interior. It has grown rapidly to a population of about 2 million...

Everything was planned from the outset. There would be designated areas for government offices, accommodation, shopping centres, even for hotels. Nothing would be allowed to exist outside its intended location.

The problem is that it was really designed to be admired by planners, rather than for people to live in. Obviously so, since even its architects don't live here. It is for cars, not pedestrians; everywhere is too far away to walk.

Luckily it is inhabited by Brazilians, the most lively of all people. Their priority is to enjoy themselves, their world revolving around Carnival, football and either the beach or the churrasco, their barbecue. They have set about humanising Brasilia...

In a recent referendum, the citizens of Brasilia chose as their territorial emblem the Lobo do Guanã, a native wolf in danger of extinction. A more representative symbol would be the vocal cicada.

Holloway: the grim inside story

Last month an inspection of Britain's largest prison for women was called off because of its appalling condition. A member of staff, who wishes to remain anonymous, reveals why to Melanie McFadyean

IT WAS a genuinely unannounced visit. Suddenly, at 10am on Monday morning, there were 20 inspectors in the jail. The governor, Janet King, wasn't even here and the deputy, Mike Ainsworth, was busy doing interviews. The news that they had arrived whirred round the jail in two hours...

There are cockroaches everywhere; you hear them crawling about at night. The inspectors were out one night with cameras, presumably taking pictures of the bugs and the rats in the rubbish. I've often seen the rats — they're the size of cats and scuttle around in the drains and the holes made by building work.

THE notion of dynamic security talked about in the Woolf report — that all people working in a prison should enjoy good relations for security to be effective — is out of the window.

officers who would never let the women down. So when you hear the phrase "overzealous, heavy-handed security", it's not our security that's overzealous and heavy-handed, it's the Home Secretary's.

This inspection is the best thing that's happened in this prison since I can't remember. Until then we felt nobody cared about the rats and the lock-ups, and we believed that the Government was doing nothing because it was what they wanted.

I'd like to invite the Home Secretary in here for a night. Let him stay in a cell with a cockroach and a rat and wait to get out for a wash in the morning to find there's nobody to unlock your door so you can't. And then, if he is unlocked to go to work, he has the choice of missing work and losing his pay or getting a chance to have a shower.

If you treat people like animals, what can you expect? They will offend. I walk around this jail and, where once I saw all the prisoners out of the rooms on their daily "freeflow" — doing hair-dressing, going to the gym, to education, to the gardens cleaning the windows, seeing their probation officers — now the corridors are silent. It's all gone to rack and ruin.

Every day when you walk in you see the statement outside which tells you your duty is to look after the prisoner with humanity and help them lead law-abiding and useful lives in custody and on their release. I could say something mild like "fat chance, but frankly I look at it and think what a load of bollocks."

It's the meal thing

Let's do lunch? Darling, I thought you'd never ask. Jonathan Freedland on an American dating agency with a difference

HE LOOKS like Kevin Costner, she's the All-American Girl. He has Gorgeous Blue Eyes, she is Very Athletic. He is a Good Listener, she's Super Cute. And now they're about to have lunch.



ILLUSTRATION: SALLY KINDBERG

shop in Washington, DC. "It's like, everybody take a chill pill; you're not going down the aisle."

Lunchtime dates are less intimidating, promises the agency blurb, corporate motto: Life, Love and Dessert. "They have a built-in time constraint. A blind date can turn into the longest night of your life, but lunch is safe, with much less pressure — and no expectation of a goodnight kiss."

John and Rachelle are meeting courtesy of It's Just Lunch, the matchmaking service that seeks to take the blind panic out of blind dates. In a country in which No Commitment is a sales pitch, the agency seeks to lure and reassure potential clients all at the same time: Can't face the emotional investment of dinner? "It's just lunch," says Nancy Kirsch, who has just set up arranged 21,000 lunches in Chicago, New York and Washington, at a cost to the client of \$60 for eight dates.

"as you usually end up knocking it all over yourself". He will go free to talk without a huge hunk of food growing cold in front of him. Rachelle, who circled skiing, fitness and social drinking on her list of interests, will avoid barbecue ribs or anything "you have to pick up with your fingers and end up smearing all over your face". She will not be ordering salad.

They don't know it yet, but they already have much in common. Both have worked so hard, they've let their social lives slip. Suddenly a lot of their friends are married, and they're running out of friends of friends to meet. "Now that I've achieved all my career goals, I'm ready for a serious relationship," Rachelle says.

John says, "My ultimate goal is a long-term relationship." John says. Both say the bar scene is not for them. "It's brutal," John says.

Nancy Kirsch has sympathy. She tends to a flock of singles who have lost their way. "I think people are so freaked out about dating, they don't know where to go any more."

The workplace used to be a reliable mating ground, but fear of an accusation of sexual harassment has made it out of bounds, especially in a politically hyper-conscious town like Washington. "This whole PC thing," Kirsch sighs. "No one can even say: 'Hello, you look nice today.'"

Not everyone has the excuse of the US state department: official who cancelled a date because of the outbreak of a foreign war. But most feel an hour in the middle of the day is all they can spare. So they tell their colleagues they're addressing a seminar on US budget policy and sneak into the It's Just Lunch HQ in downtown Washington. They fill out a questionnaire — appearance, ethnicity, attitude to children — have their picture taken and are interviewed by either Kirsch or partner Sharon Stevenson.

Applicants are sometimes rejected, like the man over 50 who wanted nobody over 30. He was told that times have changed. "Women these days are looking for a partner, not a meal ticket," Kirsch declares. "Besides, most women are making their own money." In that spirit, It's Just Lunch requires couples to split the bill, to avoid macho gestures and unseemly wrestling over the tip.

KIRSCH and Stevenson tolerate men who come clean and say it's just Looks. But if his height-to-weight ratio is dodgy, he shouldn't expect Cindy Crawford. Women are more forgiving about weight, although they have demands, too. "They like tall and they want hair," Kirsch says.

